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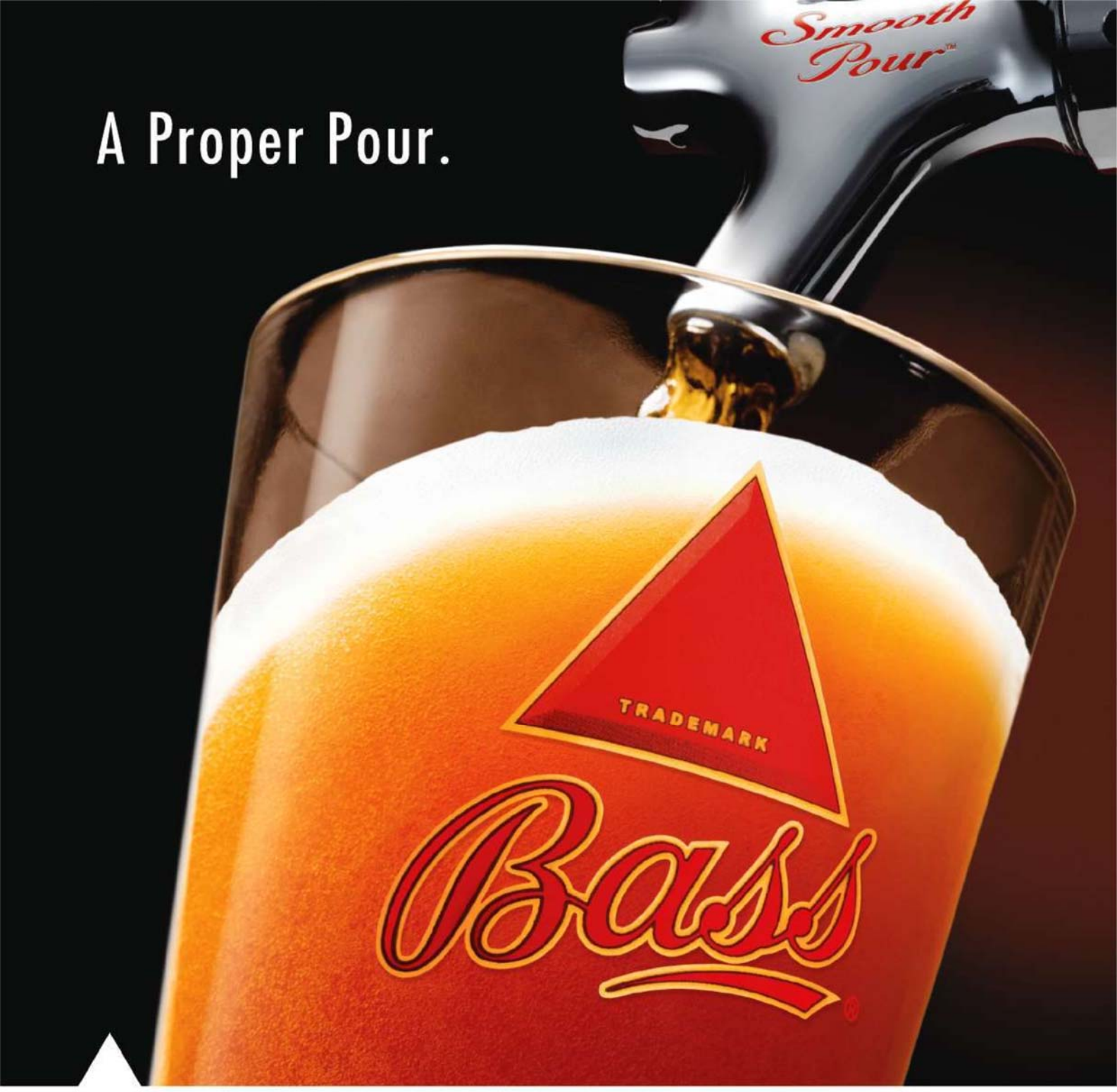

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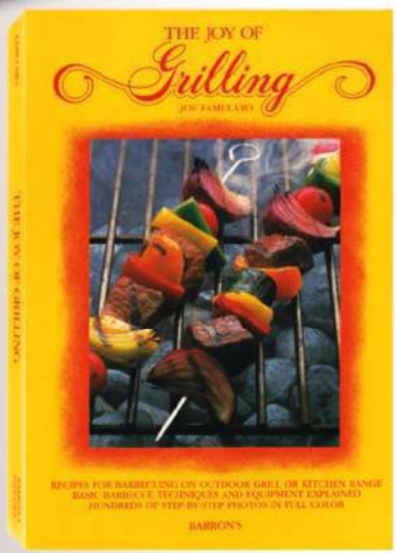

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Now in its 19th printing this book has been a James Beard Award winner. "User-friendly recipes and common sense advice." - Newsday

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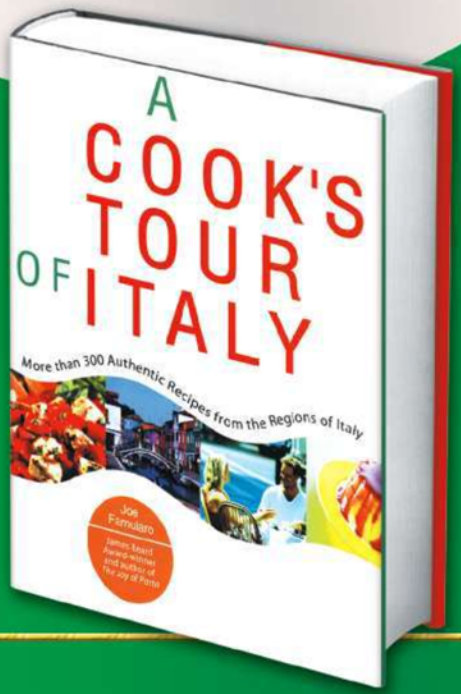

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Tastes of Italia

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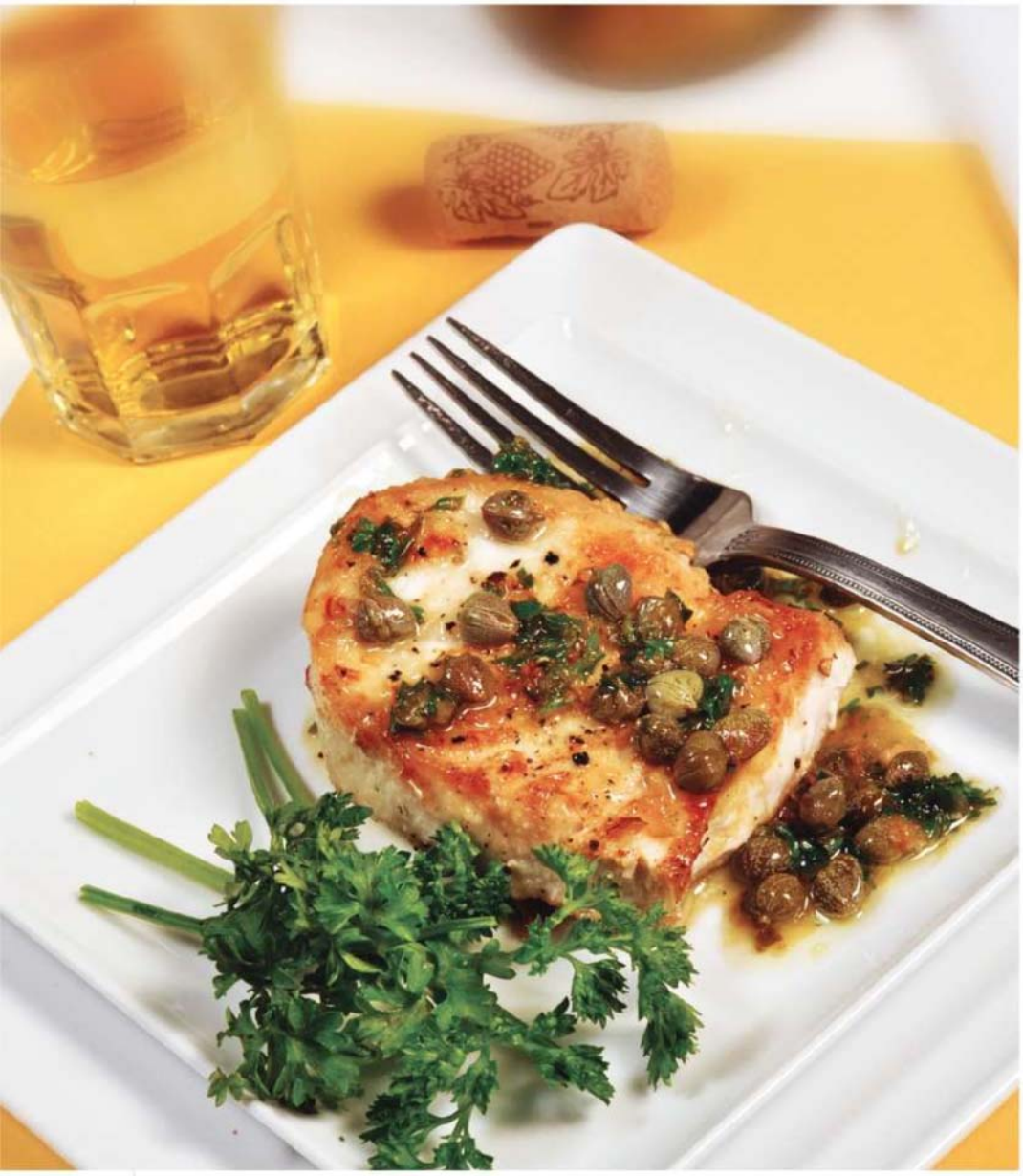

Lemon Heaven

38 In Positano many residents have their own lemon groves. Find out why the fragrant yellow fruit is so cherished for its flavor, scent, and health benefits. Try making lemon risotto or limoncello liqueur.
By Lauren Birmingham Piscitelli

Food U.

44 If you want in-depth knowledge of Italian food and wine, consider programs at Italy's University of Gastronomic Sciences. You'll have to taste a lot of food and wine and learn Italian, too.
By David Cohen

Super Salads

48 "I've come to believe everyone in Italy loves food and loves to cook," says Joe Famularo, who has collected these pasta salad recipes during his Italian travels. Enjoy them for easy summer meals.
By Joe Famularo

Tastes of Summer

54 It's time to grill vegetables and steaks outdoors, and enjoy eating al fresco as well. Reap the bounty of your backyard garden, or visit a local farmers market to get the freshest ingredients for your Italian table. Then you can try these recipes, starting with Orzo Salad with Tomatoes, Feta, and Olives, and Roasted Tomatoes with Basil Oil. For the main course, have Pan-Seared Salmon with Ginger Lime Butter or Peppercorn Steak with Cabernet Sauce. For dessert: strawberry sorbet or peaches and cream.
By Donna Marie Napoli and Tammy Minn

Tastes of Italia

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What's New

19 Tomatoes are big this month at farmers markets. Look for traditional Italian varieties and other heirloom types, and unusual ones like Green Zebra.

Food 101

22 Great tastes to try: Arugula for salads and the season's best peaches. Plus, check out Michael Chiarello's citrus-infused olive oils from NapaStyle.

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24 Captivating new cookbooks include *My Italian Kitchen: Home-Style Recipes Made Lighter & Healthier; Easy Pasta;* and *Flavors of Fruili.*

Sweet Tooth

27 Try this Almond Raspberry Cream Tart. It has a crisp crust of toasted almonds, rich mascarpone and cream filling, and sweet fruit topping.

Tuscan Lunch

29 Pastry chef Judy Witts-Francini left San Francisco to move to Florence. She knows all the best places for lunch. By Susan Van Allen

The Last Word

80 Capture the flavors of an Italian summer garden by making giardiniera, pickled vegetables for antipasti. Mary Ann Esposito shows you how.

Cover: John Michael Laurence

Summer In Italy

33 Ah, to spend summer in Italy! You could take your time traveling from town to town in search of food festivals, like those honoring peaches, pasta, peppers and polenta. Or you could delve into a copy of *Recipes from an Italian Summer*, a new cookbook from Phaidon Press with pictures and recipes that may be the next best thing to being there. After perusing the pages, you'll find yourself ready to make your own Spiced Figs or Blackberries in Grappa.

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Subscriptions & Newsstands (951) 682-3026, ext. 22

Vol. 10 No. 4 TASTES OF ITALIA (ISSN 1539-4743) is published bi-monthly by Sunwest Publishing, 3769 Tibbetts Avenue, Suite A, Riverside, CA 92506; (951) 682-3026. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Tastes of Italia, 3769 Tibbetts Avenue, Suite A, Riverside, CA 92506. Periodicals postage paid at Riverside, CA and additional mailing offices. Subscriptions, 6 issues for $24.95.

Printed in the U.S.A.

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TASTES

NEW TASTES AND TREATS FROM THE ITALIAN FOOD WORLD

Charting The Market

The green markets are awash with all kinds of tomatoes that are now at their ripest

TEXT **TAMMY MINN** PHOTOGRAPHY **JOHN MICHAEL LAURENCE**

As you head to your farmers market this summer, be on the lookout for a wide assortment of the season's star product – tomatoes. From popular favorites, like meaty beefsteaks, to hand-grown old heirloom varieties, tomatoes are the heart and soul of many Italian dishes and fresh is always best. David Gentilcore sums up this sentiment on the dedication page of his book, *Pomodoro! A History of the Tomato in Italy*: "To Mum, who still bottles her own."

Gentilcore's book, published by Columbia University Press this spring, is an entertaining history of the tomato in Italy, from its lowly beginnings to its present status as a cultural and economic power player. He points out that Italy "is Europe's premier tomato nation." About 32,000 acres are dedicated to tomato cultivation and the country produces about 6.6 million tons for the food industry, generating about $2.2 billion. But it didn't happen overnight - it took about 300 years, he adds. In the 16th century, when tomatoes arrived in Italy from Mexico, physicians decided they were poisonous, "the generator of melancholic humors," Gentilcore notes. They were also thought to bring on "ill effects," and had magical and hallucinatory powers.

Eventually, aristocrats began growing these "exotic" plants in their gardens and by the 1700s, notable cooks, like Francisco Gaudentio, included recipes for cooking tomatoes in their manuscripts. By the 19th century, tomato cultivation was spreading. As meat became more scarce and ex-

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Charting The Market

pensive, the consumption of fruits and vegetables in general increased. This was particularly true of the tomato. During the hard years of war and recession, tomatoes, which are easy to grow and offer abundant yields, became an important food source. They began to show up on pizza, pasta and in sauces.

After World War II when industrialization and modernization set in, the tomato was carried along. Canned and exported in various forms, Italian tomatoes were a respected commodity. As Gentilcore points out, tomatoes were being served in many ways - even with eggs.

In the more recent past, researchers have discovered that tomatoes are far from harmful. In fact, they contain vitamins C and A, as well as calcium and potassium. They also contain lycopene, a powerful antioxidant, that researchers believe fends off certain kinds of cancers. Gentilcore says that even the leaves of the tomato plant, which early botanists found repugnant, may be good for us. They contain tomatine which apparently reduces cholesterol absorption.

So despite the tomato's checkered past, it has proven to be quite a workhorse. Tasty, robust varieties have survived and new cultivars have elbowed their way into the garden. The result is a selection that can be hand-picked for its purpose – Principe Bourgese for drying, San Marzano for sauce, Italian Heirloom for just about everything. Other varieties you might enjoy:

• Alicante produces a lot of fruit and grows well indoors or out.

• Brandywine is an old variety with skin

that is pink or slightly purplish-red.

• Green Zebra produces green tomatoes with yellow stripes.

• Plum tomatoes have a full flavor and make a good paste.

• Gardener's Delight produces long stands of sweet cherry-type tomatoes.

• Persimmon turns out orange tomatoes in about 80 days.

• Super Beefsteak is an old variety that produces jumbo tomatoes - sometimes up to a pound each.

• Tigerella has small, orange-red fruit with pale stripes.

• Marmande Super has deep red ribbed tomatoes.

Choose tomatoes that have a deep rich color and that are heavy for their size. The skin should be taut and smooth. Most chefs agree that it's best to avoid refrigeration. But, if you want to serve tomatoes cold, such as in a salad, chill them for about an hour. Otherwise, keep them in a cool, dark place and use within a few days.

So if you aren't growing your own, stroll through your local farmers market to see what's available.

WINES: Gavi For Summer Tastes

It's summer, time for chilling and relaxing. What better way than with a cool, crisp glass of Gavi. Gavi you ask? What is a Gavi? Where is it from? Can I get it here? Gavi is a white wine from Piedmont in Northern Italy. The village of Gavi is just north of Genoa. This wine is made from the Cortese grape – one of Italy's best. The prestigious version of this wonderful white is Gavi di Gavi – the Italians know how to get right to the point don't they? Gavi wines are readily available in most fine wine stores with good international selections – Gavi di Gavi is produced by La Scolca. Gavi is great as a stand-alone sipper, but, thanks to its clean, crisp, neutral flavors, magic happens when paired with food. It's not too acidic, not too fruity, not too dry, not too sweet. If you love refreshing summer wines that will cool you off and heat up your palate, this is a must have. – *By Patrick Bartlett*

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ARUGULA

Perk up your green salads, pasta dishes and meat entrees with arugula, a leafy green with some bite.

ARUGULA, ALSO KNOWN AS ROCKET, is a leafy "salad green" type of vegetable rich in vitamin C and potassium. Prolific in Italy, it is grown worldwide and is often used in salads, pastas, or meat dishes. Arugula has a strong, peppery flavor but it lends itself to a variety of uses. Ancient Romans used both the leaves and the seeds, eating the former, and adding the latter to oils for flavor. According to food historians, arugula seed was used as an ingredient in aphrodisiac concoctions in the first century. While we don't have a recipe for that, it's easy to combine arugula in your favorite salad. Use it as you would spinach. If you're a fan of this leafy green, it's easy to grow in a home garden. Sow the seeds in a sunny spot and plant in succession to have it all summer. But provide shade in hotter months. Heat and drought cause the leaves to be smaller and stronger in flavor. Arugula is commonly used with prosciutto, goat cheese, fig, Parmesan cheese, sun-dried tomato and endive.

Feeling Peachy

Synonymous with summer, a good peach is a treat onto itself. Once called a Persian apple, its roots stretch back to China in the 10th century, B.C. These days Italy is one of the world's main producers of peaches, especially in the regions of Campania and Emilia Romagna. With its downy skin, fragrant aroma and juicy flesh, this delicate cousin of the almond and plum is best eaten right after being plucked from a tree, but can also be easily frozen or canned. Unlike some other fruits, peaches don't ripen once picked, so it's important to choose one that is soft to the touch and blemish-free. This simple fruit doesn't need much to turn it into a delicious dessert. While the old standby of peaches and ice cream is always popular, the Italian custom is to slip a few slices into a glass before adding some red wine. Peach varieties are classified by their pit. With a clingstone, the fruit's flesh sticks to the seed's ridges. This can be a pain, but the reward is a juicer, sweeter peach perfect for desserts or jams. With freestones, on the other hand, the pit can be cleanly separated from the fruit, making them preferred for eating and baking. White peaches, like Stephen's Rareripe and Keyport White, tend to offer sweeter flavors while the yellow fruit, like the popular Elberta, will have a more acidic bite. When cooking peaches it is important to remove their velvety skin first. To do so, blanch them in boiling water, then immediately submerge in cold water, but don't let them soak. The skin should then come off easily.

WHAT TO TRY

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Founded by Napa Valley chef, vintner, TV host and author Michael Chiarello, NapaStyle showcases an eclectic mix of handcrafted and exclusive home goods and artisanal specialty foods that celebrate all things cooking, entertaining, wine, garden and home. A favorite and early part of his cooking experience included infused olive oils which add an extra zing to recipes. Meyer Lemon and Blood Orange Extra Virgin Olive Oils are pressed with just-picked olives in a granite grinder. The Meyer Lemon Extra Virgin Olive Oil has a fresh, bright taste that blends well in a vinaigrette. The Blood Orange Extra Virgin Olive Oil is perfect drizzled over roasted poultry or asparagus. 8.4 oz. each. $19 to $36. See www.napastyle.com.

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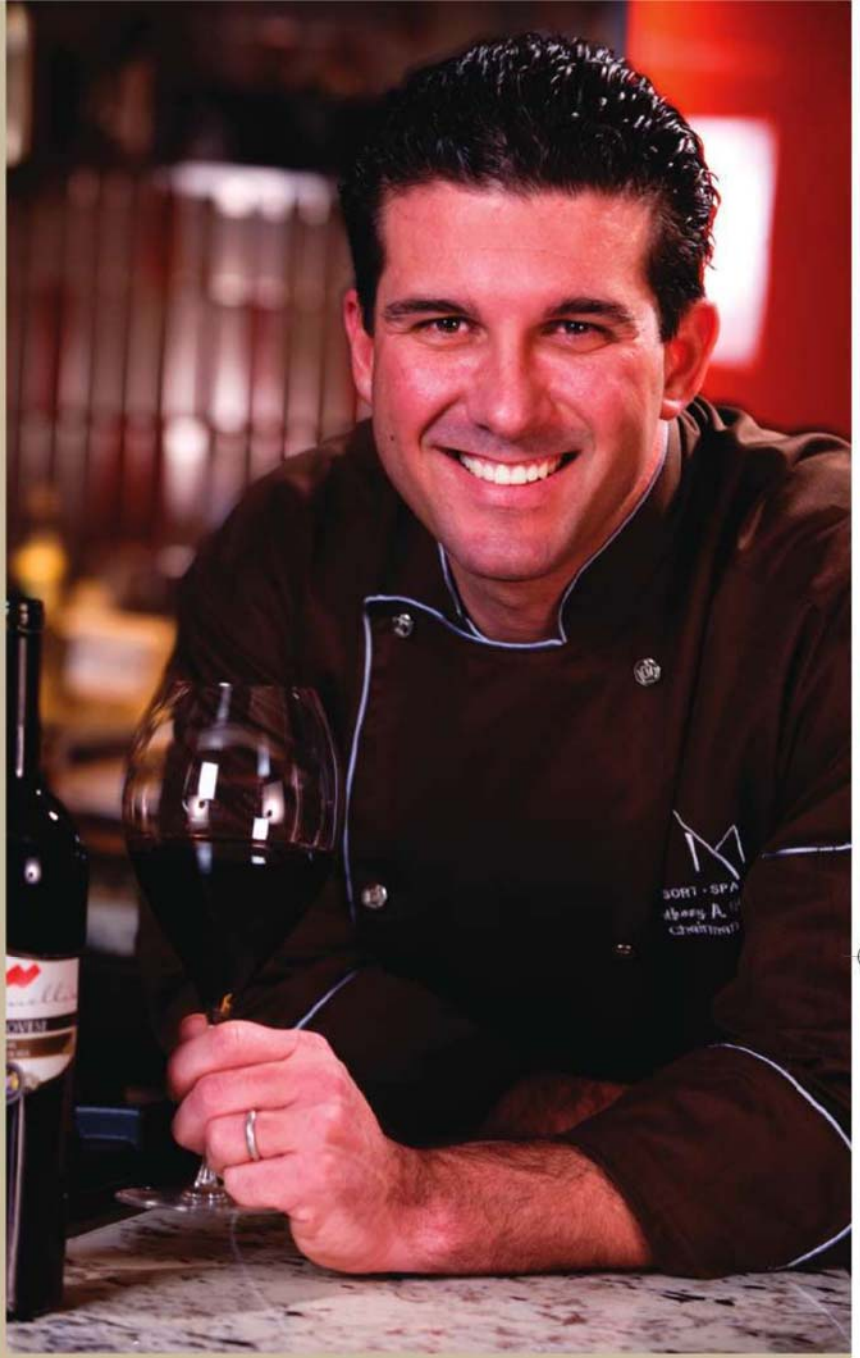

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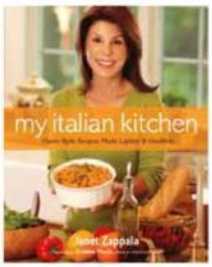
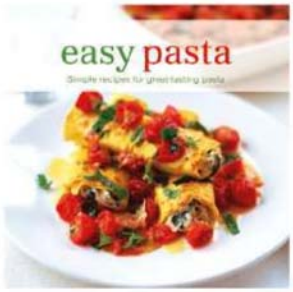
On the Book Shelf

MY ITALIAN KITCHEN
by Janet Zappala

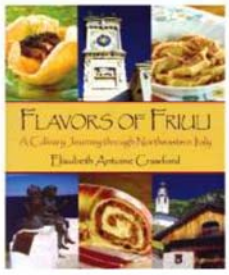


Janet Zappala may be an Emmy Award-winning journalist, but she never lets go of her passion for cooking. She recently earned her certificate as a nutritional consultant from the Global College of Natural Medicine and is also the spokesperson for the American Italian Pasta Company. She's combined her interest in Italian food and good health in her book *My Italian Kitchen: Home-Style Recipes Made Lighter & Healthier* (Addicus Books, 2010). "My goal with this book was to re-create recipes that everyone loves so that they are more healthful, but without compromising their great taste," says Zappala. Recipes like Mama Mia Ziti, Chicken Cacciatore, and desserts like Key Lime Pie call on health-conscious ingredients to boost nutritional value while cutting some calories. Whole wheat flour, lowfat cheese, and natural sweeteners like agave nectar, which is said to have a low glycemic index, are part of Zappala's pantry. Each recipe includes a nutritional note and a breakdown of what's in each serving, including calories, fat, sodium, carbohydrates, protein and fiber. If you love Italian food, check out *My Italian Kitchen*. You can have your spaghetti and eat it, too.



EASY PASTA
by Ryland, Peters and Small

With more than 100 recipes, *Easy Pasta* (Ryland, Peters & Small, 2010) helps you bring Italy to your table. Starting with the basics of choosing and making pasta, the book navigates the various types of dried pasta and clues you in on what type of sauce is best with each. For those who want to make their own pasta, there's an easy recipe with photos that walks you through it. You also have the option of flavoring your homemade pasta with tomato, beet, saffron, herbs or black squid ink. But mostly, you'll discover satisfying recipes that are easy to make. Bell Pepper, Olive, and Feta Pasta Salad, Pork and Parmesan Ravioli, and Tagliolini with Lemon and Green Olives are just a few samples. Chapters on pasta soups and salads, meat and poultry, fish and seafood, vegetables and herbs, cheese and cream, and pasta bakes include beautiful photos of finished recipes. Inspired, you won't have to think long when someone asks, "What's for dinner?" *Easy Pasta* will have an answer.



FLAVORS OF FRUILI
by Judy Hummell

In *Flavors of Friuli: A Culinary Journey through Northeastern Italy* (Equilibrio, 2010), Elisabeth Antoine Crawford has compiled 80 of this little region's traditional recipes including Mantasio Cheese Crisps, Cinnamon Laced Ravioli, and Plum-Filled Gnocchi. Hidden from the tourist mobs in Italy's northeast corner, Friuli-Venezia Giulia boasts one of the country's most distinctive regional cuisines. With influences from Austria, Hungary, and Slovenia, the Friulian people cleverly merge humble, local ingredients with exotic spices, resulting in a cuisine that never ceases to delight the palate. With inspiring photography, the book is divided into chapters that take you through the Carnia Mountains in northern Friuli, the hills and plains in central Friuli, and the Adriatic Coast in southern Friuli. Each regional section includes recipes from antipasti to dessert and narrative that guides you through the notable features of the area. If you're a fan of Friuli, Crawford's book lets you bring it home and cook it up.

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QUICK AND EASY

Smart Tart

This refreshing classic takes a few simple steps.

TEXT **TAMMY MINN**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JOHN MICHAEL LAURENCE**

No need for a heavy crust or a hot oven with this Italian tart that calls on raspberries for its eye-catching appearance. Using toasted almonds that you've crushed in a food processor or blender, add the other ingredients and spread in the bottom of a pan. Mascarpone cream adds body to the filling and a little jam provides a sweet touch to the tangy berries. Other berries are easily substituted.

Almond Raspberry Cream Tart

Crust:

- 1 ¼ cups crushed toasted almonds
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ stick butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Filling:

- 8 ounces mascarpone cream cheese
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon almond extract

Topping:

- Powdered sugar
- ½ cup seedless raspberry jam
- 3 6-oz. baskets fresh raspberries

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a bowl, combine crust ingredients, mixing with a fork. Transfer mixture to an 8-inch springform pan. Press mixture with the back of a spoon. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool.

To make the filling: Combine filling ingredients in a bowl and beat until well mixed. Add additional cream to make mixture spreadable, if necessary. Spoon filling into tart crust. Top with berries. Refrigerate for 2 hours or longer.

To serve: Microwave the jam for 15 seconds. Sift powdered sugar over top of berries and spoon raspberry sauce on top. Garnish with mint leaves.

Makes 8 servings.

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The secret to superb food is to make sure you always have the finest quality ingredients.

TEXT **SUSAN VAN ALLEN** PHOTOGRAPHY **DARIO NEGRONI**

My mantra is: Spend more time shopping and less time cooking," says Judy Witts-Francini. "After over 25 years living in Tuscany, I've learned that it's not the recipe, or the time you spend preparing food which makes it taste good. It's the quality of the ingredients which you work with. In Italian, they say: la materia prima."

It's fitting that the cooking class I took with Judy began at The Mercato Centrale di San Lorenzo in Florence, where the quality of the ingredients is superb. This huge food market is one of Italy's many masterpieces. It's a place so revered by the Florentines that it's overseen by the same art commission that looks after the Uffizi galleries. Inside the vast glass and cast-iron structure built in 1865 are two floors of mouth-watering temptations: wheels of fragrant pecorino cheese, tubs of grapes, shelves glowing with bottles of olive oil, stuffed pig heads.

CHOCOLATE SALAMI: From Tuscany

Visiting this market can be an overwhelming experience, unless you have Judy by your side. She's been shopping here since 1984. That was the year she left her job as a pastry chef in San Francisco and moved to Florence. She arrived not knowing a soul and didn't speak a word of Italian. It was at the Mercato Centrale where she learned the language—talking to the vendors, hearing their recipes, eavesdropping on conversations.

These days, Judy is part of the Mercato Centrale family. When you travel through this wonder-

Tuscan Cooking

ous place with her, you're welcomed at every step. Judy's been leading the curious like me on tours through here for more than a decade, teaching cooking classes, and leading culinary vacationers through Tuscany and other parts of Italy she's come to know and love. She's taken on Italy like an enterprising pioneer, becoming a culinary expert and creating a company called Divina Cucina (Divine Kitchen). Its logo is an angel holding a wooden spoon that you'll see in restaurant and shop windows all around Florence. They're places this woman-in-the-know recommends.

"Taste this," she says, as we stand in front of the counter of one of her friends' shops. It's twelve-year-old balsamic vinegar that wakes up every taste bud. That's just the opener to a morning of one refined taste after another: pecorino cheese with truffle honey, olive oil fresh from the press. There's also red pepper jelly—Judy's recipe that's now bottled and sold here.

Judy's style is entertaining and relaxing—perfect for summer. "In July and August, life is very casual. I like to set up a buffet and everybody helps themselves," she says.

With so many delicious things growing in the Tuscan countryside, there's much to choose from to put on that buffet. The recipes below are a few from Judy's excellent cookbook, "Secrets From My Tuscan Kitchen." Like all the recipes in the book, her directions are simple, and rely on using only the best ingredients.

So find what's freshest this season and what local farmer cultivates it best. Recreate the Divina Cucina experience in your own backyard. That way you'll be following Judy's other mantra, that's the motto of her company: "Everyone should try being Italian at least once a year!" For more information, see www.divinacucina.com.

Chocolate Salami

- 6 ounces cookie crumbs (best are small rectangular cookies called "Marie" in Italy, "Petite Beurre" in the U.S.)
- ½ cup sugar
- 5 ounces melted butter
- 2 egg yolks
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

Melt the butter and let it cool. Beat the egg yolks with the sugar until the mixture resembles cake batter. Add the melted butter and cocoa powder. (And more cocoa powder if you want it really dark).

Crush the cookies in a food processor or with a rolling pin, leaving some pieces a little larger than others so they resemble the fat in salami. Form a salami-like shape and roll it in aluminum foil.

Place in the freezer for 30 minutes or until firm. To serve, remove from freezer and let sit for 10 minutes at room temperature. Unwrap and slice. Serve with soft whipped cream and fresh berries

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Fake Fish (Pesche Finto)

- 1 pound potatoes
- 7 ounces tuna, drained
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons capers packed in white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons vinegar (I use the vinegar from the capers)
- Salt
- 2 cucumbers, peeled

Boil unpeeled potatoes in salted water until tender, as for making mashed potatoes. Peel potatoes while hot and mash with a fork. Add drained tuna and mix into potatoes. Add whole capers to taste and a good splash of the vinegar that they are packed in. Stir to combine. Add enough extra virgin olive oil to form a smooth, soft consistency. Taste to correct seasoning, for a nice tart finish.

Give the "pesce finto" a fish shape on a serving dish and make scales out of a peeled cucumber sliced paper-thin, with a caper for an eye.

Before adding the "scales" cover with a thin layer of mayonnaise.

Serve as an antipasto with crackers or bread or as a light second course.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

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Lamb Chops

Celebrating Summer

Festivals abound in Italy at this time of year.

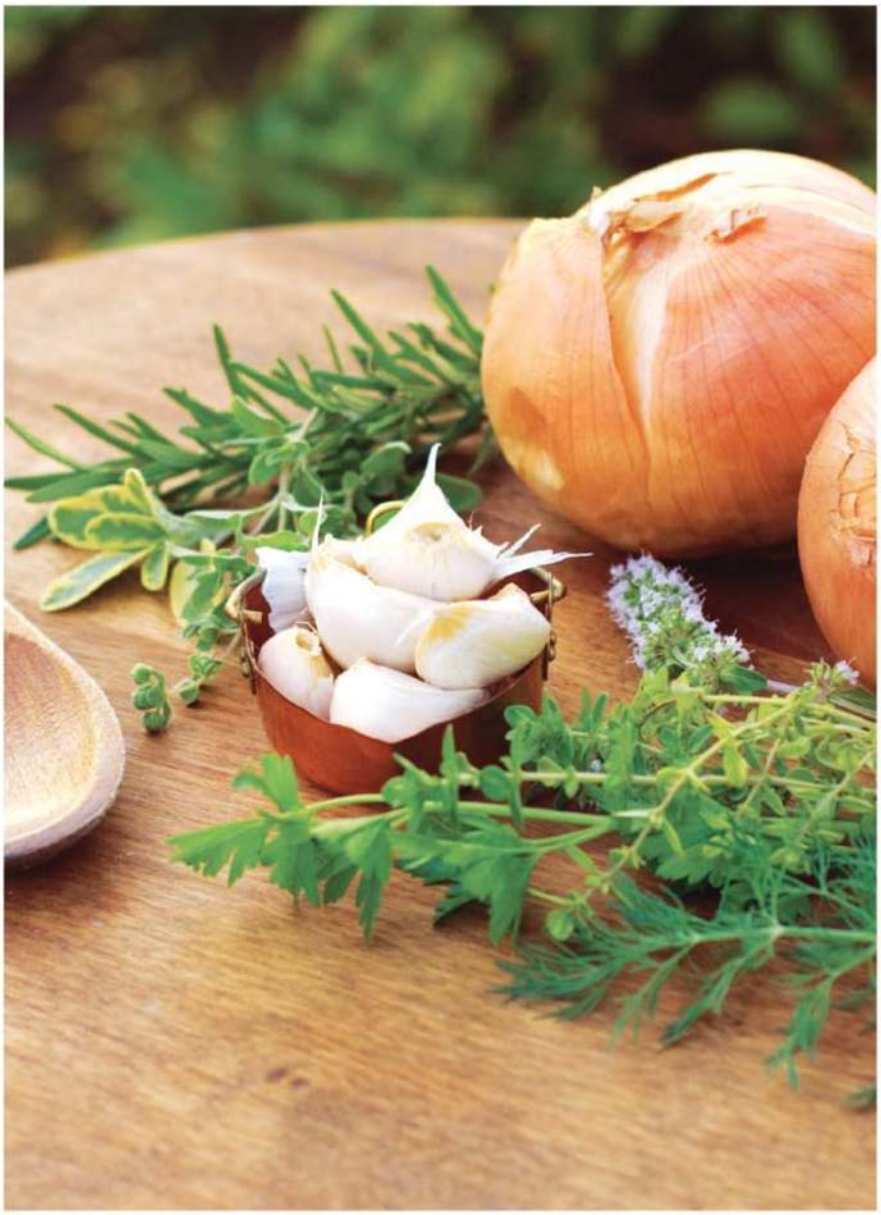
TEXT **TAMMY MINN**

On August 15th Italians celebrate Ferragosto, a national holiday when family and friends gather to enjoy a wide range of traditional foods. Originally, it celebrated the end of a hard season of labor, then took on a religious connotation. Today, it often marks a period of vacation for Italians. Often, the feast takes place outdoors in a cool mountain meadow or on a seaside beach. The menu for this annual picnic includes

hot and cold dishes made from the fresh ingredients of Italy's land. Phaidon Press's *Recipes from an Italian Summer* shares more than 400 never-before published Italian picnic-worthy recipes collected from the archives of the classic Italian cookbook, *The Silver Spoon*.

The book's photography by award-winning photographer Joel Meyerowitz takes you to the open plains and rolling hillsides, refreshing beaches and laid-back street markets of Italy's cities, town and coasts. It also inspires you with images of prepared dishes and fresh ingredients by photographer Andy Sewell. Besides recipes for picnics, you'll find some for other summer-suitable meals: light lunches and dinners, barbecues, entertaining, and easy desserts.

The book's celebration of the country's food season is a natural fit. From May to September, Italy is immersed in food festivals. In July, it's the Peach Festival in Lombardy, the Watermelon Festival in Puglia, and the Eggplant Festival in Calabria, to name a few. August brings the Cavatelli Pasta Festival in Campania, the Polenta Festival in Friuli Venezia Guilia, and the Pepper Festival in Molise.



In addition to recipes, the book includes a seasonal food calendar to let you know what's fresh locally and when. For example, apricots, fennel, and tomatoes are among the produce available all summer; asparagus, cherries and watermelon are at their best in early summer; beets, cherries, and corn taste best in mid summer, and enjoy apples, figs, plums and pears in late summer.

The book's recipes come from popular vacation spots: Sicily, Sardinia, Campania, for example, and as such, reflect the flavors and tastes of each region. But you'll also find recipes suitable anywhere: Lamb Chops with Mint, Tenderloin of Beef with Fava Beans, Spiced Figs, and Raspberry Semifreddo.

In addition to satisfying salads, delicious sides, savory main dishes, and refreshing desserts, the book offers recipes with wine and liqueur: Peaches With Champagne, Blackberries in Grappa, and Fruit in Sparkling Wine.

With *Recipes from an Italian Summer*, you can enjoy the best of Italy, even if you can't be there.

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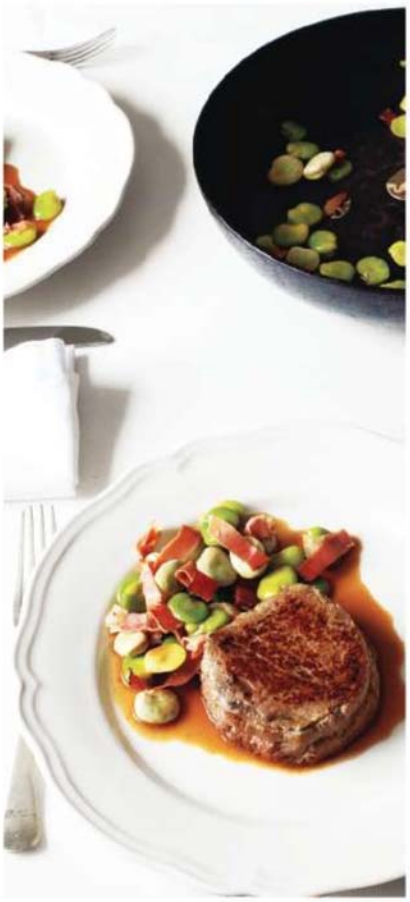

Tenderloin of Beef with Fava Beans

Scant 1 cup shelled fava beans
8 thick slices beef tenderloin
All-purpose flour for dusting
3 tablespoons olive oil
Juice of 1/2 lemon
Scant 1/2 cup dry white wine
1½ ounces speck or bacon, cut into strips
Salt

Cook the fava beans in a pan of salted boiling water for 5 to 10 minutes, until tender, then drain. Pop the beans of out their skins with a thumb and index finger. Dust the slices of beef with flour, shaking off the excess. Heat the oil in a skillet, add the slices of beef, and cook over medium-high heat, turning once, until lightly browned and cooked to your liking. Sprinkle with the lemon juice and wine and cook for a few minutes until the alcohol has evaporated. Add the fava beans and strips of speck, mix carefully, and cook for another 5 minutes. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.

Lamb Chops with Mint

Juice of 1 lemon
Plenty of olive oil for brushing
1 sprig mint, chopped
8 lamb rib chops
Salt and pepper
Peas or zucchini cooked in butter, to serve, optional

Combine the lemon juice, 3 tablespoons of the oil, and the mint in a dish, add the lamb chops, and let marinate, turning occasionally, for 1 to 2 hours.

Light the barbecue. Drain the lamb chops, place on the barbecue grill and cook for 2 to 4 minutes on each side, basting with more oil as necessary. Season with salt and pepper and serve with peas or zucchini, if desired.

Makes 4 servings.

Raspberry Semifreddo

6 egg yolks
1¼ cups superfine sugar
1½ cups raspberries
3 cups heavy cream

Beat the egg yolks with the sugar in a heatproof bowl until they are light and foamy. Set the bowl over a pan of barely simmering water and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.

Remove the bowl from the heat and continue to whisk until the mixture has cooled completely. Put the raspberries into a shallow dish and mash to a coarse puree with a fork. In a separate bowl, whisk the cream to stiff peaks, then fold in the egg mixture and the raspberry puree. Line a rectangular, freezerproof container with plastic wrap. Pour in the mixture and smooth the surface. Put the container into the freezer and freeze for at least 4 hours. To serve, briefly dip the bottom of the container in hot water and turn out the semifreddo onto a dish. Carefully remove the plastic wrap and cut the semifreddo into 1/2-inch slices.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY PHAIDON PRESS

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The Dreams of Positano

LEMON BLOSSOMS PERFUME THE AIR ALONG ITALY'S SPECTACULARLY SCENIC AMALFI COAST. CULTIVATED HERE FOR CENTURIES, THE LEMON FLAVORS RISOTTO, MARMALADE, CAKES AND LIQUEURS.

By Lauren Birmingham Piscitelli

The Tyrrhenian sea shimmers and whitewashed villas built with *copula* roofs cling to vertical cliffs. This is Positano on the Amalfi Coast where the houses are painted in a kaleidoscope of pastel colors from rose pink to butter yellow. It's a 'dream place,' just as John Steinbeck described when he first visited in 1953. Although times have changed since Steinbeck's visit, one thing has remained the same – the locals still dream about creating the perfect lemons and transforming them into sublime culinary confections.

Celeste Desiderio, or Mamma Celeste as everyone calls her, is an expert in cooking with lemons. And at 85 years old, she has been picking lemons since she was a child. "Spring produces the best lemons," she says knowingly in Italian as she picks another one from the tree and places it in her straw basket. Reserved, yet charismatic, she is the matriarch behind *B&B Casa Celeste,* as well as the beach front restaurant *da Ferdinando* at il Fornillo. Each morning she walks down 425 stairs to meet her sons Guido and Marco, and grandsons Nando, Ferdinando and Francesco at the restaurant. She keeps a garden, swims daily and climbs 425 stairs up each night after a hard day's work. It is a family affair at *da Ferdinando* and Mamma heads up the kitchen. Stand-

ing just under five feet with twinkling eyes that match the color of the sea she tells a story of family, cooking and Positano lemons.

"Lemons are a part of us, in our diet and cooking," she explains. "We use lemon for everything, it's always a good flavor and healthy, too. From *Suppli' al Limone* (rice and lemon croquettes) to using lemon with meat, fish, chicken, and even as a treatment for your skin they are good. Family and food are most important," emphasizes Mamma Celeste, as she recites the lemon recipes she will be making today, *Marmellata di Limone, Scorzette* ~ candied lemon peels, *Delizia al Limone* ~ a sponge cake with cream and lemon, and *Limoncello* ~ the after dinner digestive. Smoked Provolone grilled on lemon leaves is her personal favorite. Her basket now full, she heads to her kitchen ready to make *Marmellata di Limone*, lemon marmalade.

Waiting there is Mamma's daughter Marcella, the pastry chef at *da Vincenzo,* her family trattoria. Poised, blond and with a striking resemblance to her mom, she too enthuses over the *Sfusato* lemons. "I cannot live without them," she confides. "I use their zest, juice and peels, they are magic!" Marcella is renowned for her award-winning *Delizia al Limone,* a delicate lemon and cream cake.

The lemon process starts. First Mamma firmly pricks each lemon with a fork and places it in ice water, this process takes away the bitterness. Her method is simple, no strict measurements, just lots of lemons, sugar and water; slow cooked until thick and tasty, to the cook's liking. She continually stirs the simmering lemons in her copper pot, saying, "it's the trick to getting it just the right texture." This type of hand-made pot is called a *pentola in rame* and is perfect for slow cooking.

Living on this divine coast will illuminate more about Italy's past than any schoolbook, classroom or guidebook. Locals such as Mamma Celeste, who generously share their stories of war, invasions, pirates, family recipes, cooking, folklore and lemons, make the best teachers.

A little of what is known about lemons: lemons made their way to Italy's southern coast in the first century B.C. brought by Arab travelers. Alexander the Great also carried lemons to the Amalfi Coast in 300 B.C., and they show up in paintings and mosaics at Pompeii's *'Casa del Frutteto'* in 79 A.D. Jesuit fathers began cultivating them in Sorrento around 1600.

There are two types of lemons in southern Italy's Campania region, the *Femminello Ovale Sorrentino* (or *Massese)* from Sorrento and the *Sfusato Amalfitano* from the Amalfi Coast. Although they have become symbol of Italy's Mediterranean Coast, their origins trace back to India, China and Mesopotamia. Etymology tells us that the word "lemon" is derived from the ancient Persian word *limu*, first recorded in an Arabic literature book in the 10th century.

Lemons flourish in southern Italy and on the Amalfi Coast, a protected UNESCO World Heritage site. The microclimate, volcanic soil, sun and salty sea air provide perfect growing conditions for the ever-blooming lemon tree. To learn more about lemons take a short Vespa ride from Positano to Massa Lubrense along the Amalfi Coast, a stretch of winding road that curls like ribbon candy. The panorama is a cerulean sea that meets rocky vertical cliffs with dramatic hairpin turns. This road leads to Antonio Gargiulo's lemon grove where he tells his story of lemons.

There are more than 45 different varieties of lemons in the world, or 46 counting the one he grafted on a grapefruit tree. Antonio, who had studied law in England, returned to the farm when he learned that his family was about to sell their farm. "My family started cultivating lemons in 1900," he explains. "At that time men worked the lemon groves and women worked the cattle. The lemons from our farm were shipped to Belgium where citrus did not exist," he says.

"There are two kinds of lemons here in Campania, the *Femminello Ovale Sorrentino* (or *Massese)* and the *Sfusato*", he reiterates. "The big difference between the *Femminello* and *Sfusato* are the skin and size. The *Femminello Ovale Sorrentino* or *Massesse*, has a smooth skin, pale color and stronger flavor. They are smaller too with an oval egg shape. The *Sfusato* has an uneven skin. Both types are glorified to be the best lemons in the world, with few seeds and twice as much vitamin C as an orange. The skin contains the essential oils that give it its flavor. The average lemon tree lives to be 70 years. It has one main root that grows deep into the soil to anchor it and a skirt of small superficial roots that grow around it," Antonio says.

Under a pergola abundant with lemons and white lemon flowers (called *zagare* in Italian), Antonio explains: "The main ingre-

"Italians got serious about lemon cultivation AROUND 1795 WHEN THE BRITISH NAVY *mandated lemon juice consumption* FOR ITS SAILORS TO PREVENT SCURVY."

LEMON MAGIC:
Antonio Gargiulo and Celeste Desiderio praise the flavor of Campania lemons.

dient for *Limoncello* is the *Femminello Ovale Sorrentino* lemon. We peel only the skin with no white pith, the skin contains the most flavorful oils. Then we soak the peels in ethyl alcohol, remove them after a week, add sugar with water, and then freeze. This is *Limoncello*, an authentic elixir, served as an *aperitivo* before dinner or a *digestivo* after dinner."

Antonio's lemons are grown without pesticides, chemical fertilizer or man-made machinery. He covers them in winter with a netting, and grows them on *pagliarelle*, a chestnut wood pergola or trellis. He follows the rules of I.G.P.- the Protected Geographical Indication, a group that certifies lemons grown under specific standards relating to authenticity and geographical territory. COVAL, another consortium, also regulates lemon production.

Italians, such as Antonio's family, got serious about lemons when the Royal Navy mandated lemon juice consumption for its sailors around 1795. Italian families took their shovels and planted lemon trees just about everywhere. The lemon's high vitamin C content prevented scurvy and the British demanded more lemons for their sailors, and this created a lemon boom.

Another little known citrus fruit grown in southern Italy is the *cedro*. It has an elliptical shape, grows as large as a football with thick white pith and has a lemon flavor. Usually eaten raw after dinner, it cleanses the palate.

Lemons - a symbol of fidelity and love- are at the heart of everything on the Amalfi Coast. Lace makers embroider lemon motifs on aprons, artisans mold them into soap, chefs infuse them into antipastos to desserts and the general populace considers them a cure-all for colds, as a well as a natural energy booster.

Lauren Birmingham Piscitelli is founder and owner of Cooking Vacations Italy which specializes in culinary tours, hands-on cooking classes and cultural adventures in Italy. Meet Mamma Celeste and cook with lemons, too, at Cooking Vacations Italy. See www.cooking-vacations.com or phone (617) 247-4112 for more information.

How to: *Limoncello*

Limoncello

The peculiar microclimate of the Sorrento Peninsula helps the growth of the unique sfusato Amalfitano lemon: large fruit with thick and scented peel and with superior properties. The *massese*, meaning 'from Massa,' lemon differs from the Amalfi Coast lemon in that it has a thinner peel and a stronger aroma.

Lemons were already being exported to the United States and to Great Britain in the 19th century. Whole books have been written about the medicinal value of this fruit, which contains twice as much vitamin C as an orange. In addition to vitamin C, lemons contain vitamins A and B1-3. The juice is useful for sore throats, mouth ulcers, liver and pancreatic tonics, stomach ulcers, arthritis, gout and rheumatism. Nowadays, they are used not only for health and culinary purposes, but also as the main ingredient of *limoncello*, a lemon liqueur obtained from an infusion of lemon peel. Limoncello is an authentic elixir, which is suitable as an aperitif, a digestive or as an evening drink with friends. The ingredients for limoncello are simple and few, and making a batch does not require much work.

- 5 organic lemons
- 2 cups vodka or Everclear
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups water

To begin, you need a large glass jar with a lid. Wash the lemons, pat them dry and remove the zest. A vegetable peeler does the job best; it gives you long wide strips of zest with hardly any of the bitter white pith. If you get some of the pith with the zest, carefully scrape it away with the tip of the knife.

Fill the jar with the alcohol and, as you remove the zest, add it to the jar. Mix the ingredients, cover the jar and store it. Now all you need to do is wait. After about 5 to 6 days, combine the sugar and the water in a saucepan. Bring it to a boil and cook until thickened, about five minutes. Let the syrup cool then add it to the limoncello mixture. Then simply strain the limoncello into bottles and discard the lemon zest.

Keep the bottles in the freezer so it is icy cold until you are ready to drink it.

Lemon Risotto

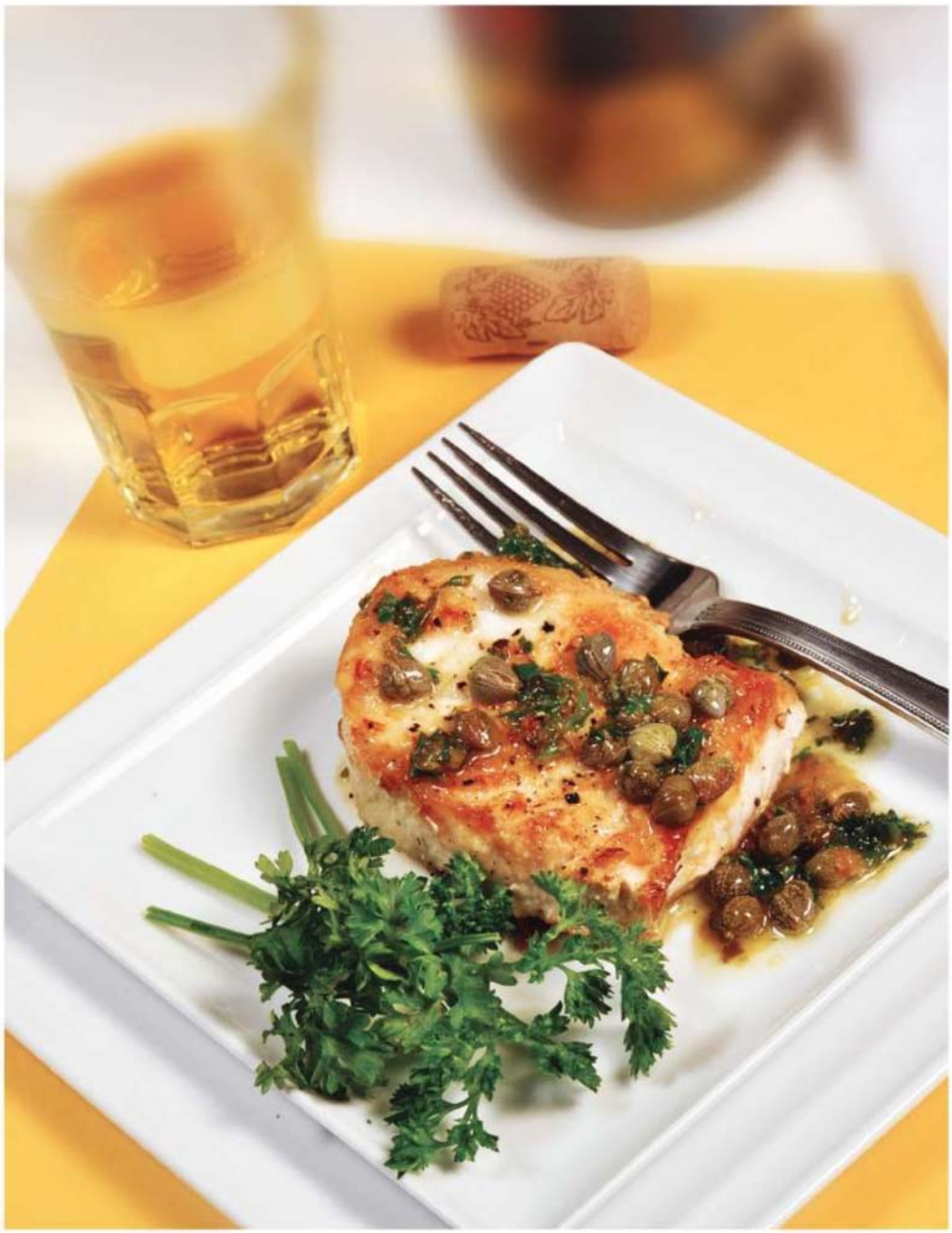
- ½ cup butter
- 1 white onion, finely chopped
- 1 pound risotto rice
- 4 ounces white wine
- 6 cups vegetable broth
- 3.5 ounces Parmigiano Reggiano, grated
- Juice and zest of 4 lemons
- Lemon-infused olive oil

In a large shallow pot, melt the butter and add the chopped onion. Add the rice and toast for a moment. Add the white wine and allow to evaporate. Add the broth a little at a time, stirring continuously and adding more as it absorbs. Cook for about 15 minutes.

Just before serving, add the grated Parmigiano, the lemon juice and the lemon zest. Serve immediately with a drizzle of lemon-infused olive oil, a garnish of grated Parmigiano and a bit of lemon zest.

Makes 4 servings.

-Recipe courtesy of Le Tre Sorelle, Positano



Sicilian Swordfish in a Lemon Caper Sauce

- 4 swordfish steaks, ½-inch thick
- ½ cup flour
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- Juice of 2 lemons
- Zest of 1 lemon
- ⅓ cup minced fresh parsley
- ¼ cup capers, rinsed and drained

In a baking dish, stir together flour, salt and pepper. Pat the fish dry, then lightly coat them with the flour mixture.

In a large skillet, heat 4 tablespoons of olive oil on medium. When oil is almost smoking, add the fish and cook 3 to 4 minutes per side. Remove the fish and place on warm platter; cover with paper towels.

Quickly discard all the oil in skillet and add remaining 2 tablespoons oil to the skillet. Add the lemon juice, zest, parsley and capers and bring mixture to a boil. Serve sauce with fish.

Makes 4 servings.

Italy's Home Grown Cooking School

IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FOOD AND THE CULTURE THAN THE RECIPES, CONSIDER THESE PROGRAMS THAT TEACH FUTURE GASTRONOMES HOW FOOD SHOULD LOOK AND TASTE.

By David Cohen

Legend has it that Carlo Petrini was so incensed when a McDonald's opened right by the Spanish Steps in his beloved Roma that he decided to wean people off processed, high salt and sugary products and expose them to food produced by local farmers without using industrial pesticides and questionable additives. This farm-to-table concept results in healthier food, bursting with fresh flavors and is the cornerstone of the Slow Food Movement. It is also the stuff upon which Italy's University of Gastronomic Sciences is based.

Founded by the provinces of Emilio-Romagna and Piemonte, along with Petrini, the university offers undergraduate and graduate programs for those wanting to become gastronomes: individuals skilled in the production, distribution, and promotion of biosustainable foods. Students who graduate from this unique program will be tomorrow's innovators, food editors, growers and marketers of artisan products and leaders in the world of sustainable biodiversity.

The university which was rated #1 in 2008 by Il Sole 24 Ore, Italy's leading daily financial newspaper, offers two campuses. The Pollenzo campus is located in Bra in the Piemonte region and the Colorno campus is near Parma in the Emilia-Romagna region. The classrooms and administrative offices in Pollenzo are located in two beautiful Romanesque structures – the Casina Albertina and the Agenzia di Pollenzo, which both date from the early 1800s. The Agenzia houses not only the university but also the Albergo Hotel and restaurant Guido, a Slow Food establishment designated by a picture of a snail. The Banca del Vino (wine bank) is also at this location, providing a true destination for gastronomic learning and experiences. The Colorno campus provides space for students in the two, one-year master's programs. The center of the campus is the Reggia di Colomo dating from the 13th century.

The university opened in 2004 offering a three-year undergraduate program in Gastronomic Sciences and in 2008 added a Graduate degree in Gastronomic Resource Management. In addition to formal instruction, students also benefit from the many partners the university has joined with. For example, every other year in Torino, students have the opportunity to taste products at Terra Madre ("Mother Earth"), a Slow Food-sponsored conference. At Salon del Gusto, another Slow Food-sponsored event, students learn about preservation projects for products which were disappearing from the culinary landscape. They also encounter hundreds of cheeses, cured meats, olive oils, and other products from artisan producers who strive to create the best product possible with no middlemen.

During the first year at the university, students take such courses as physiology of taste, agriculture and food history. The second year includes food production, sensory analysis, viticulture and enology. Year Three incorporates such courses as food economics and the history of cuisine and gastronomy. Each academic year also includes field study seminars (stages), ranging from five to 10 daily featuring a culinary theme, such as cured meats, oils, cheeses, and fish, for example, within a defined geographic region or country. Students learn the intimate details of the food's production chain, tradition, and biodiversity, as well as meeting various food artisans.

Students also visit local markets and take part in tasting and analyzing local products – truly a hands-on experience. Seven credits are also earned in cultural

gastronomy workshops – interactive events containing panel discussions and symposia with various professionals. There are also student-run projects, tastings and cultural events.

In addition, students have the opportunity to taste and analyze wine at La Banca del Vino, a wine bank originally set up to showcase the wines of 300 different producers. Stored under perfect conditions in a series of caves, the wines are available for tastings or purchase when they are at their best. Many small producers lack the room to store their own wines, so each one offers six cases of their finest product to Banca del Vino. Here, instructors lead students through the sensory steps necessary to determine if a wine is true to its origins and varietal characteristics.

Culinary film workshops are also offered in collaboration with the Berlin International Film Fest and the internationally renowned German cinematographer, Michael Ballhaus. Students can also take a course in ecological horticulture and sustainable agriculture which offers hands-on experience in cultivating fruits and vegetables. Theories learned in classes are applied in the campus gardens.

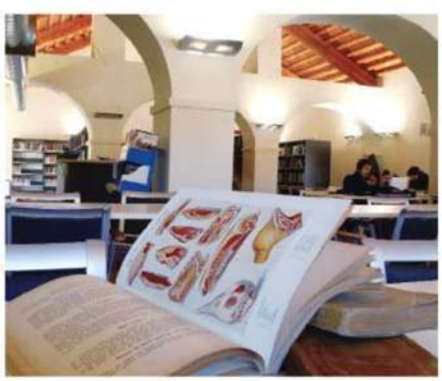
Speaking and understanding the Italian language is a requirement by the beginning of the second year, though the first year is taught in both English and Italian. The undergraduate program concludes with a research thesis and presentation defense. The fee is 19,000 Euros (about $26,000 U.S. dollars) which includes tuition, room and board, and required travel.

The two-year graduate degree in gastronomy and food communications is designed to follow the undergraduate program and is organized to train managers in gastronomic tourism and marketing. The Pollenzo-based program imcludes a study phase at the University of New Hampshire. The final phase of the program is a work/study internship at a particular company or organization involving marketing, journalism, management, distribution, logistics, and food tourism. Some of the courses at the Pollenzo campus include international trade and management of food products, gastronomic food science and technology, aesthetics of tasting and planning and design. The fees are identical to the undergraduate program.

The one-year programs offered at the Colorno campus are for international students who may already be working in the food industry and would like to spend a year immersing themselves in more focused areas of gastronomy. These programs are offered in English and cost 21,000 Euros (about $28,500 U.S. dollars) for tuition, and room and board in either Parma or Colorno.

The Master of Italian Gastronomy and Tourism is both intensive and multidisciplinary, taking a broad look at Italian culture that focuses on both various food products and biosustainability. Here, gastronomy is approached from a social and historical perspective. Italian language is studied as well as Italian culture along with seven weeks of field study allowing students to visit various regions for total immersion in the foods of Italy. The focus is placed on such key foods as cured meats, cheese, pasta, olive oil, tomatoes, fish and wine. The last eight weeks are spent in an internship at the Slow Food organization or a related organization culminating in a work-related thesis. Some of the courses include food ethics, gastronomic technique, history of local specialty products, food technology, and sensory analyses.

The other one-year graduate degree program is entitled Master of Food Culture and Communications. In class lessons and tastings as well as an assortment of field seminars throughout Italy and abroad sllows for a broad understanding of food and food culture. The program concludes with a work/study internship in which students are involved in marketing, editorial, communication and research with Slow Food or related businesses. The program blends history, anthropology and sociology of consumption to allow students to broaden their insights into what "quality" really means, while promulgating strategies to promote locally grown biosustainable foods and culinary education. So you see, in Italy, food is more than a good meal - it's an art, a science, and a full education.



University of Gastronomic Sciences

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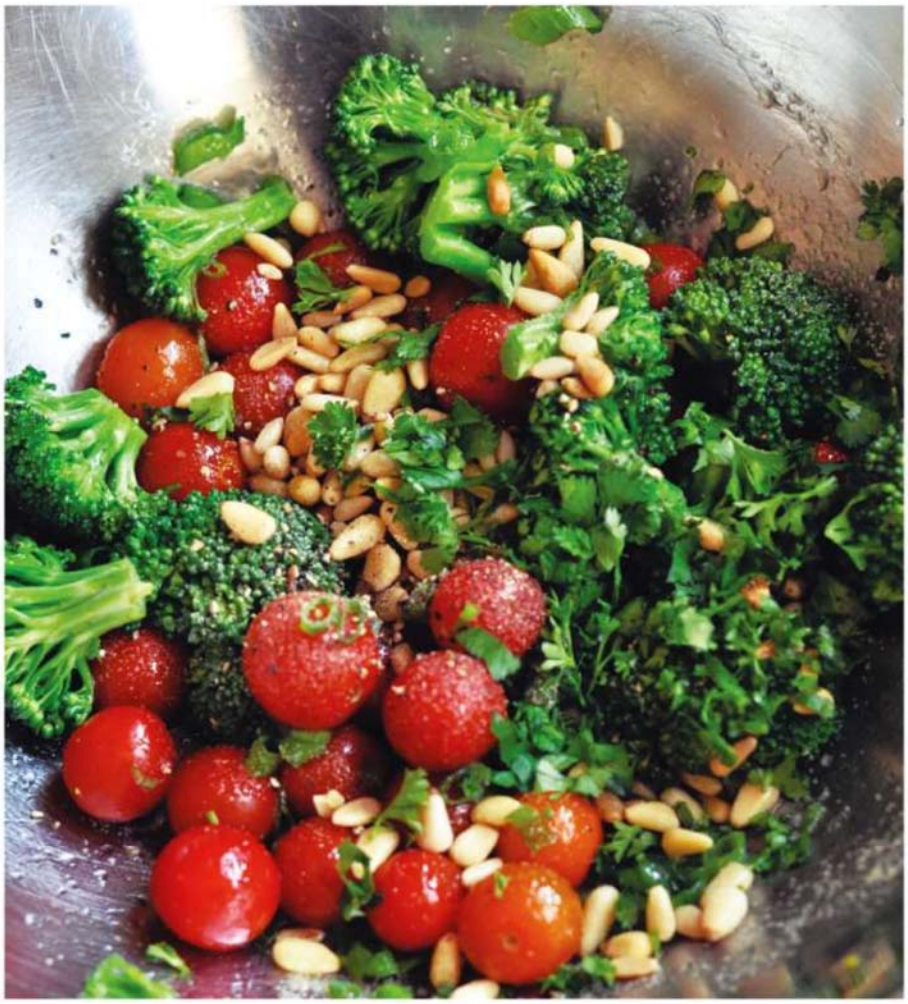
For admission information, academic requirements and faculty profiles as well as additional general information, see the university's website at www.unisg.it or email them at info@unisg.it.

Super Salads

Keep cool this summer with these delicious salads that feature the authentic flavors of Italy.

TEXT **JOE FAMULARO** PHOTOGRAPHY **JOHN MICHAEL LAURENCE**

I shall never forget the day I went from Palermo in Sicily to Erice, a fabulous town high up in the hills, some miles away. I was driven in a car by a local Siciliano who liked to talk about food and he gave me a fantastic pasta salad recipe. I've come to believe that everyone in Italy loves food and loves to cook. At the time, eight or 10 years ago, I didn't think Italians gave much thought to pasta in salads, but my mind has changed about that. It is so easy to cook these salads because the pasta can be cooked ahead and kept at room temperature with a tablespoon or two of olive oil stirred into the pasta to keep it from sticking together. Also, the dressing can be made ahead and left in its bowl at room temperature. When you want to eat, you just stir in the dressing and there is your meal. "Summertime and the living is easy" says a popular song and so it is and should be. The following recipes are for lighter, easier summertime living. They are refreshing, satisfying and very tasty. Enjoy your summer and enjoy these salads.



Pasta and Broccoli Salad

Ditalini pasta is small tubular shaped pasta and works well in salads. Broccoli, tomatoes, scallions and pasta make a good salad combination.

- ½ pound ditalini, cooked and drained
- 2½ cups (cooked or steamed) broccoli florets
- 8 ounces cherry tomatoes
- ½ cup thinly sliced scallions
- ¼ cup finely chopped flat parsley
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup toasted pine nuts
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Parmesan shavings

Put all the ingredients except the cheese shavings in a large bowl and toss well. Be liberal with the black pepper. Leave at room temperature for 1 to 2 hours, toss again before serving.

Divide among 6 plates and add cheese shavings on top of each.

Makes 6 servings.

Penne Pasta Salad with Artichokes and Gorgonzola

The artichokes, onions, peppers, olives and Gorgonzola make this a delicious salad.

- ½ pound penne pasta
- 2 cans (14-oz.) artichokes, drained well, dried, and finely sliced
- ⅔ cup fat-free Italian salad dressing, store-bought
- 1 cup finely diced red or yellow bell pepper (or both)
- ½ cup finely sliced red onions
- ¼ cup Greek olives, halved
- ½ cup crumbled Gorgonzola cheese
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Cook the pasta according to package directions; drain well and put it in a large bowl. Add all the other ingredients. Toss well, and serve on a large platter or on individual plates.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Farfalle and Pesto Salad

This is one of my favorites. An interesting and tasty way to serve it is to add it to the top of lightly salted sliced tomatoes.

- 2 medium cloves garlic, peeled and halved
- 1 cup packed basil leaves
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons water
- ½ pound farfalle pasta, cooked and drained
- 1 cup cooked and drained green peas
- ½ cup finely chopped red onion

Put the garlic and basil in the bowl of a processor and finely mince both. Add the Parmesan and pulse 1 or 2 times. Salt and pepper to taste. With processor on, add oil and water through the food tube. If too thick, add more water by tablespoons.

Combine the pasta, green peas and onions in a large bowl. Add the pesto and toss well. Adjust salt and pepper seasoning.

Makes 4 servings.

Tri-Colored Rotini with Sliced Zucchini in Garlic-Basil Dressing

For the Dressing:

- 2 medium garlic cloves, peeled and halved
- ⅓ cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped basil
- ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

For the Salad:

- ½ pound bow ties, cooked and drained
- 1 cup thinly sliced fresh baby zucchini with skin on
- 1 cup cooked green peas
- ½ cup finely chopped red onion

Put the dressing ingredients into the bowl of a processor and process until the dressing is smooth.

Combine the salad ingredients in a bowl, add the dressing and toss well.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Rigatoni with Chicken, Beans and Radishes

- 4 small boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, about 1 pound
- ½ pound rigatoni, cooked and drained
- ½ pound fresh green beans, trimmed and cut in half
- 1 cucumber, peeled, seeded and cut in 1/4-inch dice
- 1 cup Italian salad dressing (purchased)
- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- 1 teaspoon dried dill weed
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup thinly sliced fresh radishes
- 3 cups finely shredded Boston or Bibb lettuce

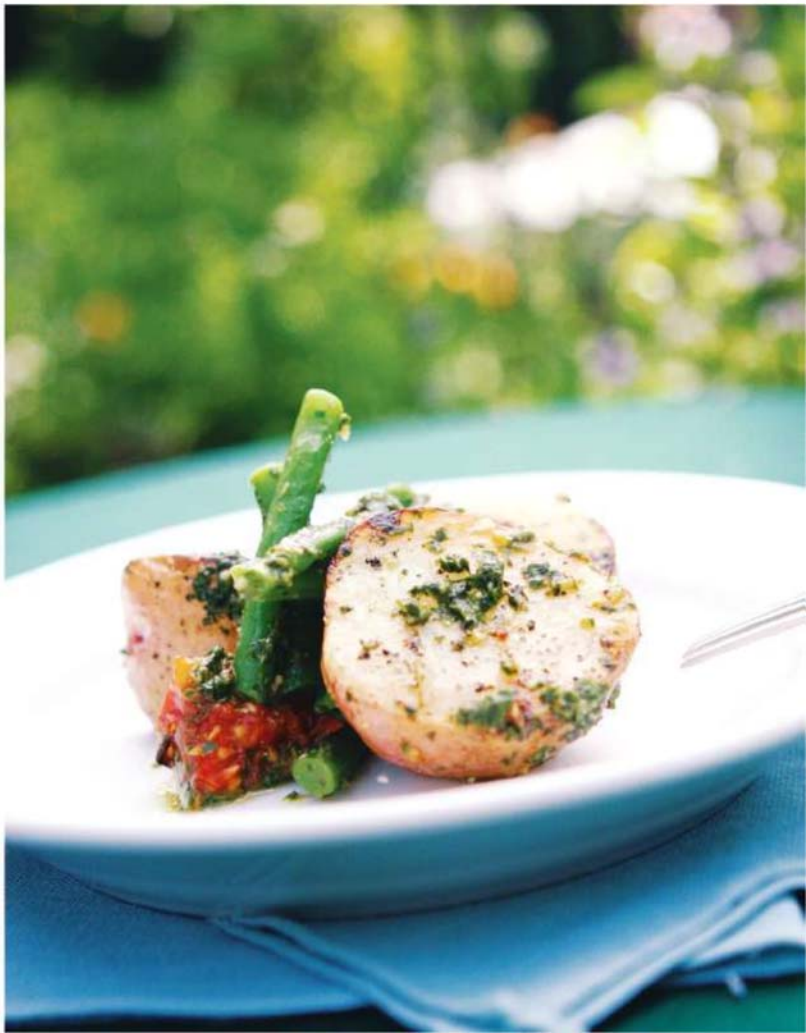
Heat the grill and when the fire is ready, oil spray the grid. Grill the chicken breasts 4 minutes per side. Remove, thinly slice, and set aside in a bowl. Add the cooked pasta and toss.

Cook the green beans until tender, drain well and add to the pasta. Add the cucumber, salad dressing, orange zest, dill weed, salt and pepper and the radishes.

Distribute the salad greens to 6 plates and apportion the pasta salad over the greens. Serve at room temperature with crisped baguette slices.

Makes 6 servings.

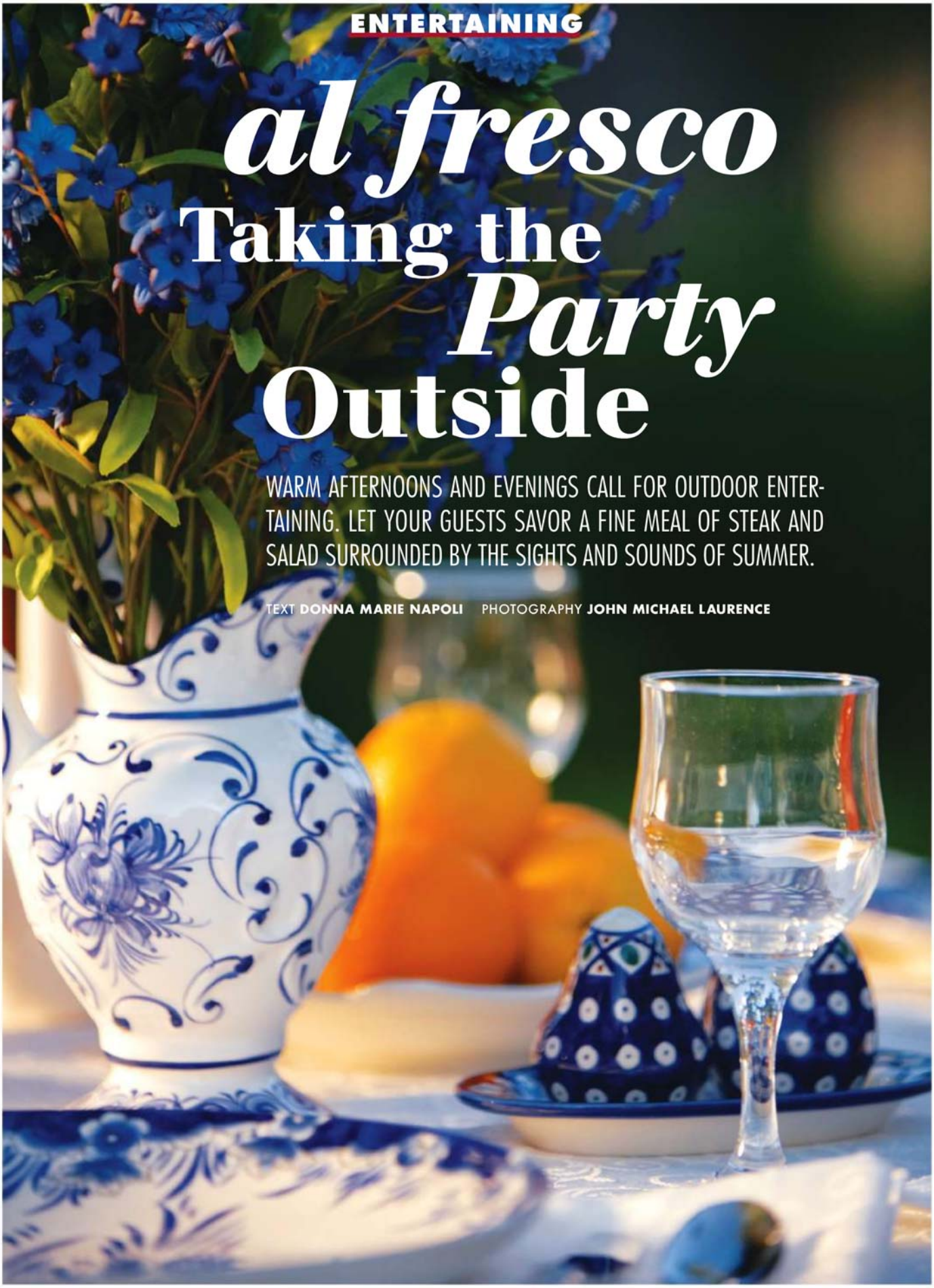
Olio
Extra
Vergine
di Oliva



al fresco Taking the *Party* Outside

WARM AFTERNOONS AND EVENINGS CALL FOR OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING. LET YOUR GUESTS SAVOR A FINE MEAL OF STEAK AND SALAD SURROUNDED BY THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF SUMMER.

TEXT **DONNA MARIE NAPOLI** PHOTOGRAPHY **JOHN MICHAEL LAURENCE**



Mixed Olives with Fresh Mozzarella and Almonds

- 4 cups mixed or green olives
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh orange zest
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon zest
- 1 pinch dried red chile flakes
- ½ pound whole fresh mozzarella cheese balls, drained
- 1 cup dry-roasted whole almonds
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a medium skillet combine olives, oil, garlic, orange and lemon zest and chile flakes. Cook on low for about 7 to 8 minutes. Remove and let cool. In a serving bowl combine olive mixture with cheese, almonds, parsley, salt and pepper, mixing to coat well. Serve at room temperature or cool.

Makes 4 servings.

Orzo Salad with Tomatoes, Feta and Olives

- 1 cup orzo, cooked according to package directions
- 2 cups mixed cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup Kalamata olives, pitted
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- Salt and ground pepper to taste
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese

Drain cooked orzo and add to serving bowl. Add remaining ingredients, tossing to mix well. Let stand at least 15 minutes before serving.

Makes 4 servings.

Roasted Tomatoes with Basil Oil

- 1 pound fresh cherry tomatoes
- Sea salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Basil oil

- ½ cup olive oil
- 12 to 15 fresh basil leaves
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 pinch dried red chile flakes

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a baking dish combine tomatoes, salt and 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Roast for 25 to 30 minutes. Meanwhile, puree the basil oil ingredients. To serve, combine tomatoes and oil in a serving dish, tossing to coat well.

Makes 4 servings.

Peppercorn Steak with Cabernet Sauce

- 4 sirloin or New York steaks, ½- to ¾-inch thick, 6 ounces each
- Coarse sea salt
- 3 tablespoons coarsely ground fresh black pepper
- 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup cabernet sauvignon wine
- 2 tablespoons butter

Pat the steaks dry. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, pressing pepper into surface with your hands. Set aside.

Heat oil in a large skillet on medium-high heat, until skillet just starts to smoke. Carefully place steaks in skillet. Cook about 3 minutes on the first side, then turn steaks over and cook the second side until deep brown, about 3 minutes for medium rare. To test for doneness, press meat with back of knife. If firm, meat is probably done. Transfer steaks to a platter and tent with foil.

Pour fat out of skillet and add wine. Cook on medium heat for about 7 minutes or until wine reduces to about 1/4 cup. Scrape bits off bottom and whisk in butter. Drizzle sauce over steaks and serve.

Makes 4 servings.

Pan-Seared Salmon with Ginger Lime Butter

- 4 teaspoons butter, softened, at room temperature
- 3 teaspoons fresh lime juice, warmed slightly
- 2 teaspoons fresh ginger, minced
- 1 teaspoon chopped parsley
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 4 salmon fillets (4-oz. each), skinned if desired and patted dry
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

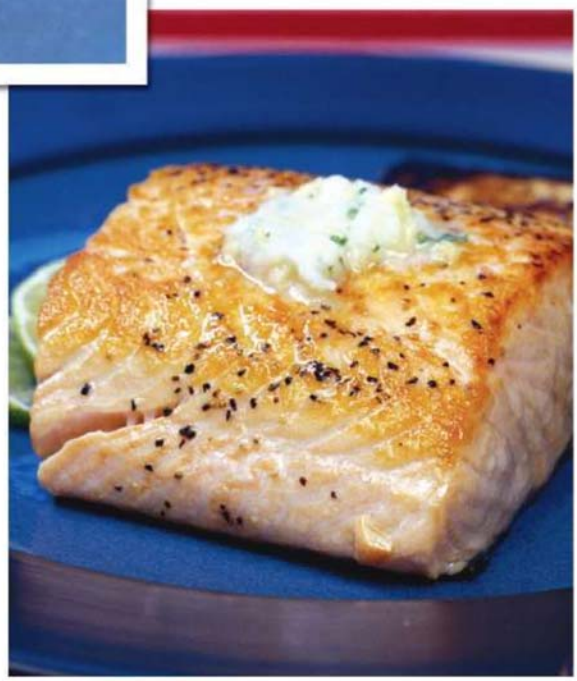
Preheat oven to 500°F.

In a small bowl, mix together the butter, lime juice, ginger and parsley. Set aside.

In a large ovenproof skillet, add the olive oil and spread by turning pan to make a light film. Lightly sprinkle salt and pepper on salmon. When oil just starts to smoke, add salmon, skin side up, and cook about 1 minute or until nicely browned. Turn the fish over, cover the skillet, and put it in the oven. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes or until desired doneness. Using a thick potholder or towel, remove the skillet from the oven. Press on top of fish. If firm, salmon is done.

Serve immediately with ginger lime butter and extra fresh lime juice, if desired.

Makes 4 servings.



Spaghetti with Fresh Tomato Sauce

- ½ pound spaghetti, cooked according to package directions
- 5 large ripe tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced thin
- 8 to 10 fresh basil leaves
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Take the tomatoes and slice off a thin slice from one end. Grate that end over a bowl using a cheese grater. When you're done you should have the skin left in your hands. Add salt and pepper and set "sauce" aside. In a small skillet combine olive oil and garlic and cook on low for 6 to 8 minutes, until garlic gently cooks through. Do not burn it! Remove, pour into tomato sauce. Add drained pasta and toss with basil. Add grated cheese and a drizzle of olive oil to serve.

Makes 4 servings.

Rigatoni with Eggplant and Leeks

- ¾ pound rigatoni
- 2 whole eggplants, sliced ¾-inch thick
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil, plus a little extra for drizzling over eggplant
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 2 leeks, white part only, cleaned and thinly sliced
- ½ teaspoon dried red chile flakes
- 1 (28 oz.) can plum tomatoes, crushed by hand, without juice
- ½ cup chicken broth
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 12 fresh basil leaves, torn
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Cook the rigatoni according to package directions.

While rigatoni is cooking, season the eggplant slices with salt and pepper and drizzle with a little olive oil. Grill in a broiler or on a barbecue grill until golden brown on both sides. Remove and cut into bite-size pieces. Sprinkle with extra grated cheese and return to broiler to brown the cheese. Remove after a few minutes and set aside.

In a large skillet combine olive oil, garlic, leeks and red chile flakes. Cook for 6 minutes on medium. Add the tomatoes, broth, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.

When pasta is done, drain and add to the sauce. Stir in eggplant and basil and toss to coat well. Sprinkle with cheese and serve.

Makes 6 servings.

Shells with Cherry Tomatoes and Basil

- ½ pound pasta shells
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced thin
- 1 pound cherry tomatoes
- 1 cup Kalamata olives, halved
- 1 pinch red chile flakes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 handful fresh basil leaves, coarsely chopped or left whole
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Cook pasta according to package directions.

In a large skillet, combine olive oil, garlic and tomatoes and cook on medium-low for 3 to 4 minutes. Add olives, chile flakes, salt and pepper, stirring to mix well. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes.

Drain pasta and add to skillet, tossing to mix well. Stir in basil and serve with grated cheese and an extra drizzle of olive oil.

Makes 4 servings.

Grilled Eggplant

- 1 medium eggplant
- Salt
- Olive oil for brushing
- Pepper

Topping:

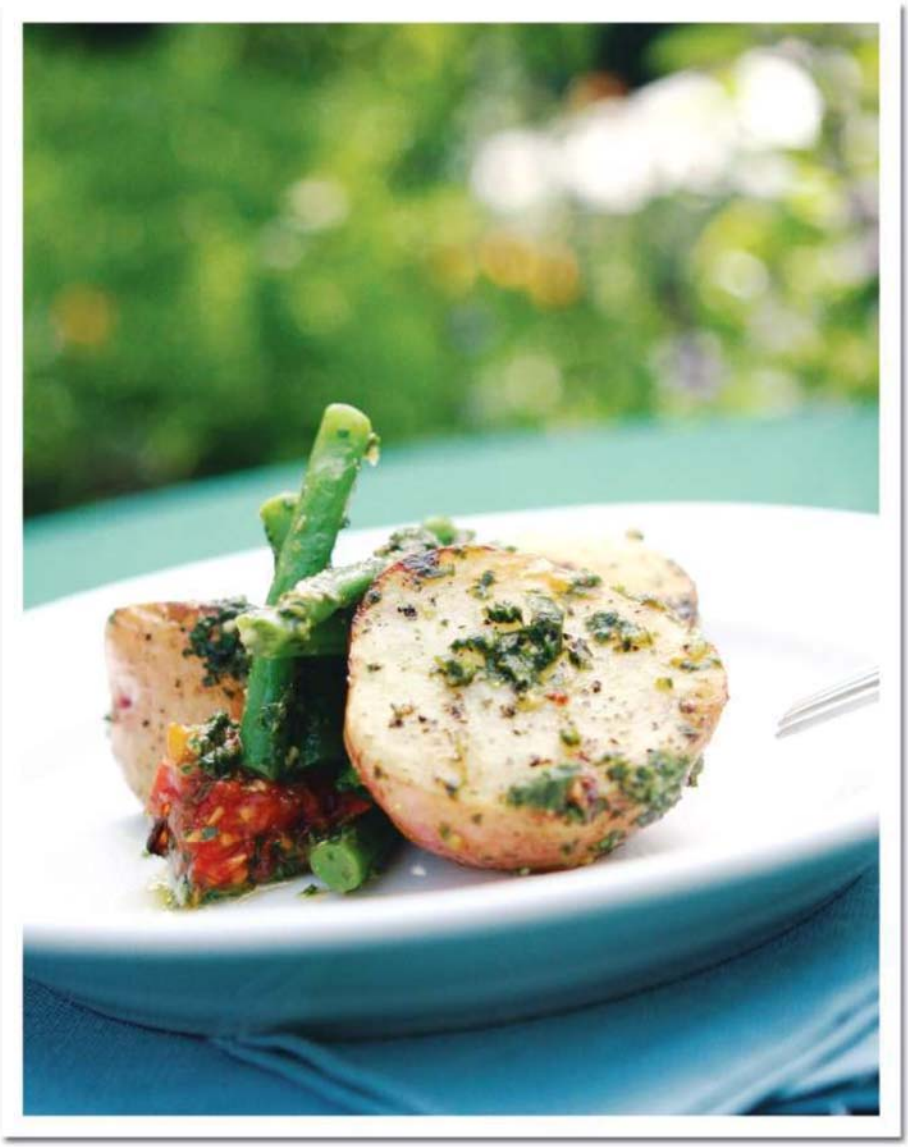
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Roma tomatoes, chopped
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- 1 teaspoon dried red chile flakes
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- Pinch of salt

Trim the top and bottom off the eggplant. Cut the eggplant into 1/2-inch slices and place in a colander, sprinkling each layer with salt. Drain for about 30 minutes. Rinse and pat dry.

Position grill or broiler rack about 5 inches away from heat source. Brush eggplant on one side with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place oiled side facing heat. Cook until golden brown, about 4 to 5 minutes. Brush the other side with oil and turn the eggplant. Cook about 4 to 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, stir together 4 tablespoons olive oil, tomatoes, parsley, basil, red chile flakes, lemon juice and salt.

Arrange eggplant on platter and top with tomato mixture. Makes 4 servings.



Grilled Potato Salad with Tomatoes and Pesto

Pesto:

- 4 cups basil leaves, packed
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- ½ cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted
- 4 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- 1 pinch black pepper

Salad:

- 1 pound small red potatoes, quartered
- ½ pound cherry tomatoes
- ½ pound green beans, ends trimmed and cut in half
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a blender or food processor, combine pesto ingredients and process until smooth. Set aside. Arrange potatoes and tomatoes on skewers and brush lightly with olive oil. Add salt and pepper to taste. Grill on medium high 6 to 8 minutes per side for potatoes, 4 to 5 minutes for tomatoes.

Meanwhile, add beans to a large pot 3/4 full of boiling water. Cook 5 to 6 minutes, until fork tender. Remove, add to a bowl filled with ice water for 2 minutes. Drain and set aside. When potatoes and tomatoes are grilled, combine in large bowl with beans and pesto sauce, tossing to coat well. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Makes 8 servings.

Fresh Greens with Pine Nuts and Parmesan Cheese

Dressing

- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 pinch of salt
- 1 pinch of freshly ground pepper

Salad

- 4 cups baby spinach leaves, washed and dried
- 2 cups mixed greens, washed and dried
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- ¼ cup toasted pine nuts
- Shavings of Parmesan cheese

Whisk dressing together in a bowl and set aside. Mix salad items together in a large bowl, add dressing. Mix well and serve.

Makes 4 servings.

Watermelon with Prosecco Sorbet

- 2 cups chopped watermelon
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup prosecco (or champagne)
- ½ cup sugar

In a blender, puree melon until smooth. Heat water in a small saucepan on medium heat; add sugar and cook for 3 minutes. Remove, add to melon puree with prosecco, mix well and refrigerate for 2 hours. Remove and process in an ice cream maker according to manufacturer's directions.

Note: You can substitute the melon of your choice.

Makes 4 servings.

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TEXT **TAMMY MINN** PHOTOGRAPHY **JOHN MICHAEL LAURENCE**

Fresh Berry Granita with Vanilla Ice Cream

- 4 cups water
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 cups fresh blackberries or raspberries
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- Vanilla ice cream
- Fresh mint for garnish, if desired

In a medium saucepan, combine water and sugar. Cook on medium until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat and set aside.

Puree the blackberries with lemon juice and pour through a strainer to remove seeds and skins. With the back of a spoon, push on berries to release all the juice. Combine the juice with the syrup and refrigerate for 2-3 hours.

Transfer mixture to a baking dish. Freeze until mixture becomes slushy, about 60 minutes. Break up crystals with a fork and continue freezing, breaking up the crystals a second time after 30 minutes. Repeat process after another 30 minutes. Remove and serve with vanilla ice cream.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Peach Sorbet with Prosecco

- 5 ripe peaches, peeled and pitted (for puree)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- ¾ cup sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 ripe peach, peeled, pitted and chopped
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract
- Prosecco (or champagne)

In a blender or food processor, puree the 5 peaches with lemon juice, sugar and salt until well blended.

Stir in chopped peach and almond extract. Cover and refrigerate 2 hours. Transfer to an ice cream maker and freeze according to manufacturer's instructions.

Serve with prosecco (or champagne) in goblets.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Lemon Cream Pie with Berries

1 (10-oz.) prepared graham cracker crust

For the filling:

1 (¾-oz.) package of instant lemon pudding mix
¼ cup sour cream
1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon peel
2 cups whipped topping, well-chilled, divided

For the topping:

1 cup fresh blueberries
1 cup fresh strawberries, halved
Thin strips of lemon peel for garnish, if desired

In a small bowl, stir together the pudding mix and milk as directed on the package. Add the sour cream and grated lemon peel. Stir 1 minute. Gently stir in 1 cup of the whipped topping.

Spoon the mixture into the pie shell. Refrigerate at least two hours before serving.

To serve: In a medium bowl, combine the berries. Cut the pie into wedges and top each slice with berries. Add a few strips of lemon peel for garnish, if desired.

Makes 8 servings.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PRISCILLA IEZZI

Quick Peach Jam

- 2 pounds ripe peaches, pitted and diced
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ teaspoon fresh lemon juice

In a wide shallow skillet, combine the peaches and sugar. Set on medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, stirring often. Simmer until mixture is thick, about 12 to 15 minutes. Add the lemon juice and remove from the heat. Let cool, then transfer to a plastic container and refrigerate up to 3 weeks.

Makes 48 one-tablespoon servings, or about 3 cups. Is also great on vanilla ice cream or gelato.

Poached Peaches with Raspberry Sauce

- 4 ripe peaches
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 6 whole cloves
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 2½ cups water
- 4 tablespoons raspberry jam

Peel the peaches, but leave them whole. In a medium pot, combine sugar, cinnamon, cloves, lemon juice and water. Bring to a boil, reduce to simmer and add peaches. Cook 5 minutes. Remove with slotted spoon, set aside to cool. When the peaches cool, halve them and remove pits. To serve, strain syrup and pour 4 tablespoons on peaches. Take raspberry jam and microwave for 10 to 12 seconds. Remove and top peaches. Serve with fresh mint for garnish, if desired.

Makes 4 servings.

Peaches and Cream

- 4-6 ripe yellow peaches
- 1 cup whipping cream
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract

Peel and slice the peaches, and place in a serving bowl. Beat together cream, sugar and almond extract. Spoon 2 tablespoons of cream mixture into peaches, tossing to mix well. Serve with remaining cream.

Makes 4 servings.

Rustic Peach Tart with Cherries

Crust

- 1½ cups flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon melted butter
- 4 tablespoons milk

Filling

- ½ cup cherry preserves
- 3 cups peeled and sliced peaches
- Pinch of sugar
- 7-8 fresh cherries, pitted and cut in half

Preheat oven to 425°F.

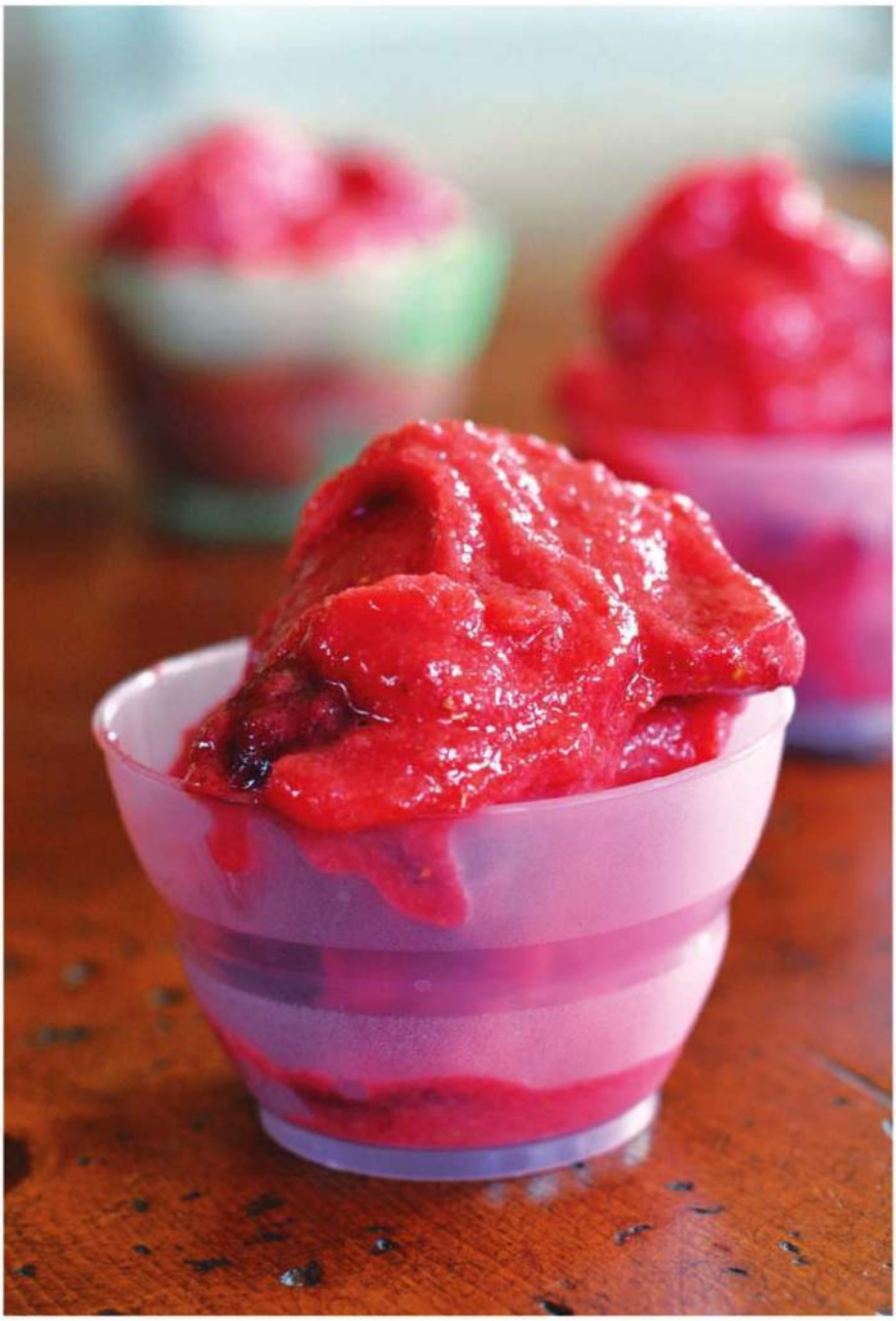
To make the crust: Combine flour, salt and sugar in a bowl. Slowly add the olive oil and mix with a fork until crumbly. Set aside.

In another bowl, mix together vanilla, butter and milk. Add 1 tablespoon at a time to the flour mixture and continue to mix with a fork until dough stays together.

Shape the dough into a ball. Place the ball on parchment paper and roll out until as thin as possible, about 1/8-inch thick. Use flour on rolling pin to prevent sticking.

Spread the preserves in an 8-inch circle over the crust, and top with sliced peaches. Carefully fold up edge of crust over the peaches. Keep tart on paper and lift onto baking sheet. Top with cherries. Sprinkle with sugar. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until crust is light brown. Cool for 1 hour and serve.

Makes 8 servings.



Fresh Strawberry Sorbet

- 3 baskets fresh strawberries, stems removed
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup cream

Topping

- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 basket fresh strawberries, stems removed and sliced into quarters and halves
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup sugar

Wash the berries thoroughly in warm, soapy water, then rinse and drain with ice cold water. Drain again.

Puree two-and-a-half baskets of berries with sugar, lemon juice and cream. Freeze in ice cream maker according to manufacturer directions with one-half basket cut into bite-size pieces.

To serve: Combine lemon juice, 1 basket of berries, vinegar and sugar. Toss gently and spoon over frozen sorbet.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Blackberry Cobbler

- 6 cups blackberries, rinsed
- 1⅔ cup sugar
- 4 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons vanilla
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon

Topping:

- 1½ cups all-purpose baking mix (like Bisquick)
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ⅓ cup 1% milk

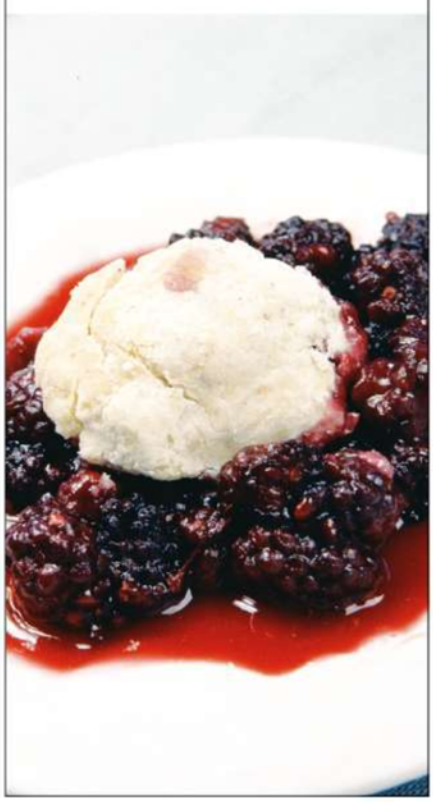
Preheat oven to 400°F.

Spray a 9-inch round or square baking dish with nonfat cooking spray.

To make filling: Combine blackberries, sugar, cornstarch, vanilla and cinnamon in a large bowl, stirring to mix well. Pour into baking dish.

To make topping: Combine baking mix, sugar and nutmeg. Stir in milk to make dough. Gather dough into a ball and gently knead on floured surface. Pat out to 1/4-inch thickness and tear random pieces. Arrange on berry filling, leaving holes for steam to escape. Sprinkle extra cinnamon and a teaspoon of sugar on top. Bake on bottom rack for 25 to 30 minutes, or until bubbly and lightly browned. Let cool before serving.

Makes 12 servings.



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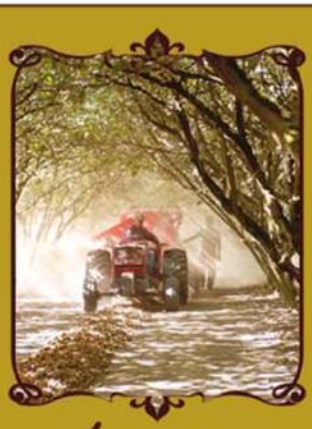

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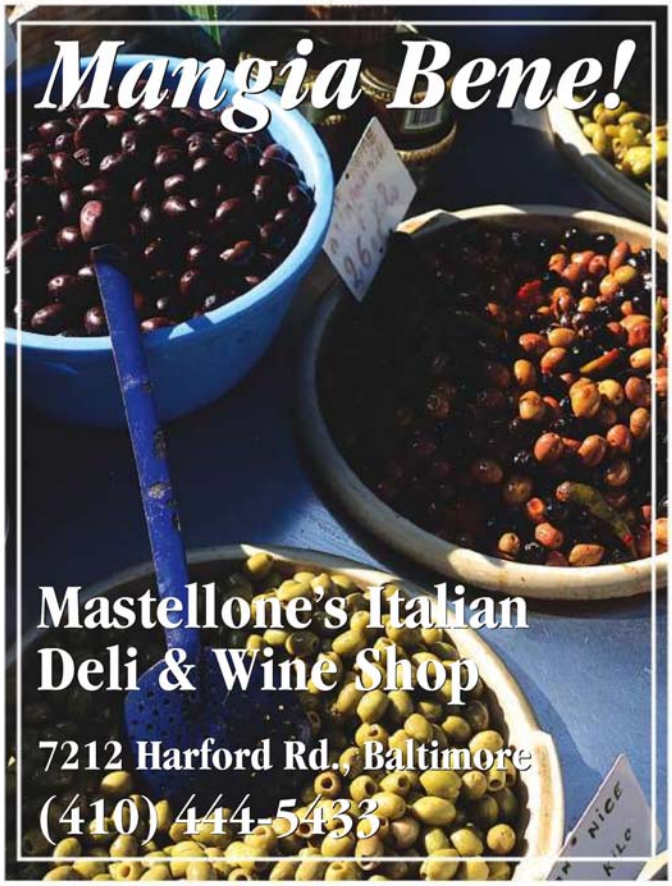

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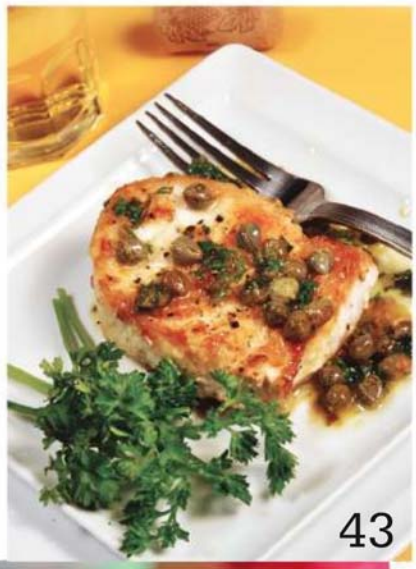

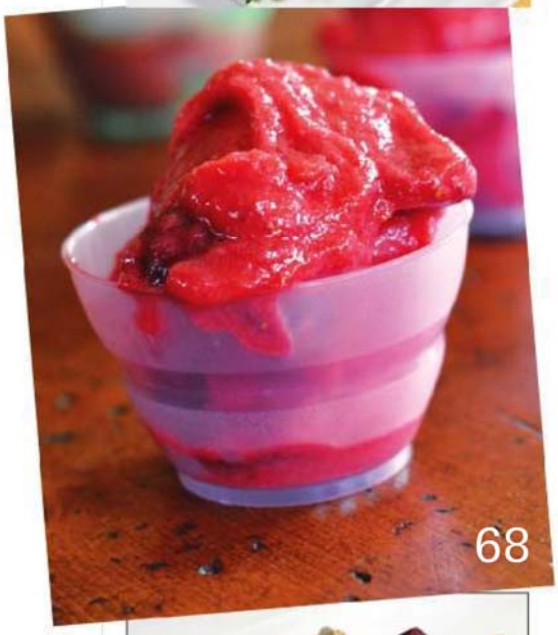

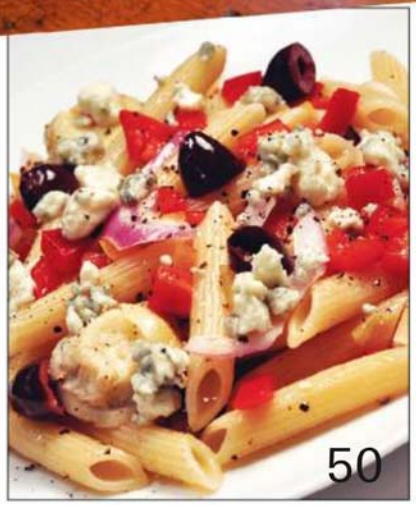

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Vol. 10 No. 4 TASTES OF ITALIA (ISSN 1539-4743) is published bi-monthly by Sunwest Publishing, 3769 Tibbetts Avenue, Suite A, Riverside, CA 92506; (951) 682-3026. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Tastes of Italia, 3769 Tibbetts Avenue, Suite A, Riverside, CA 92506. Periodicals postage paid at Riverside, CA and additional mailing offices. Subscriptions, 6 issues for $24.95.

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Garden In A Jar

Summer is in the air and what a great way to savor the season into the future

TEXT **MARY ANN ESPOSITO** PHOTOGRAPHY **JOHN MICHAEL LAURENCE**

Right about now vegetable gardens are bursting with fresh vegetables and at the height of summer Italians make giardiniera, pickled vegetables that are used for antipasti and with meats and poultry. The best vegetables for a giardiniera are green beans, carrots, sweet and hot peppers, small onions, cauliflower, and mushrooms. Make sure they are at the height of freshness and avoid using any that are bruised. Blanched and put up in jars filled with vinegar and oil, the giardiniera makes an attractive still life, a garden in a jar. And unlike the time consuming art of canning, this step can be skipped using the method below which will allow the taste of summer vegetables to be extended just a bit longer.

Giardiniera

- 4 cups white vinegar
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 4 teaspoons sea salt
- 2 teaspoons celery seed
- 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon whole black peppercorns
- 12 whole cloves
- 4 bay leaves
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 5 cups mixed fresh vegetables of your choice, stemmed, washed and cut into 4-inch long strips

Combine first eight ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to simmer and cook for 2 minutes. Cool. Stir in the oil and set aside.

Fill a large pot of water and bring to a boil. Add a tablespoon of salt; cook each vegetable type separately for 1 minute, scoop out of the water with a slotted spoon and plunge into a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. Drain. When all the vegetables are cooked, arrange them artfully in the jar and pour the vinegar mix over them to cover them. Add sprigs of fresh herbs such as parsley, basil, thyme or tarragon.

Place the cap on the jar and refrigerate. The vegetables will keep for 3 to 4 weeks.

– Recipe courtesy www.ciaoitalia.com

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